MARCH

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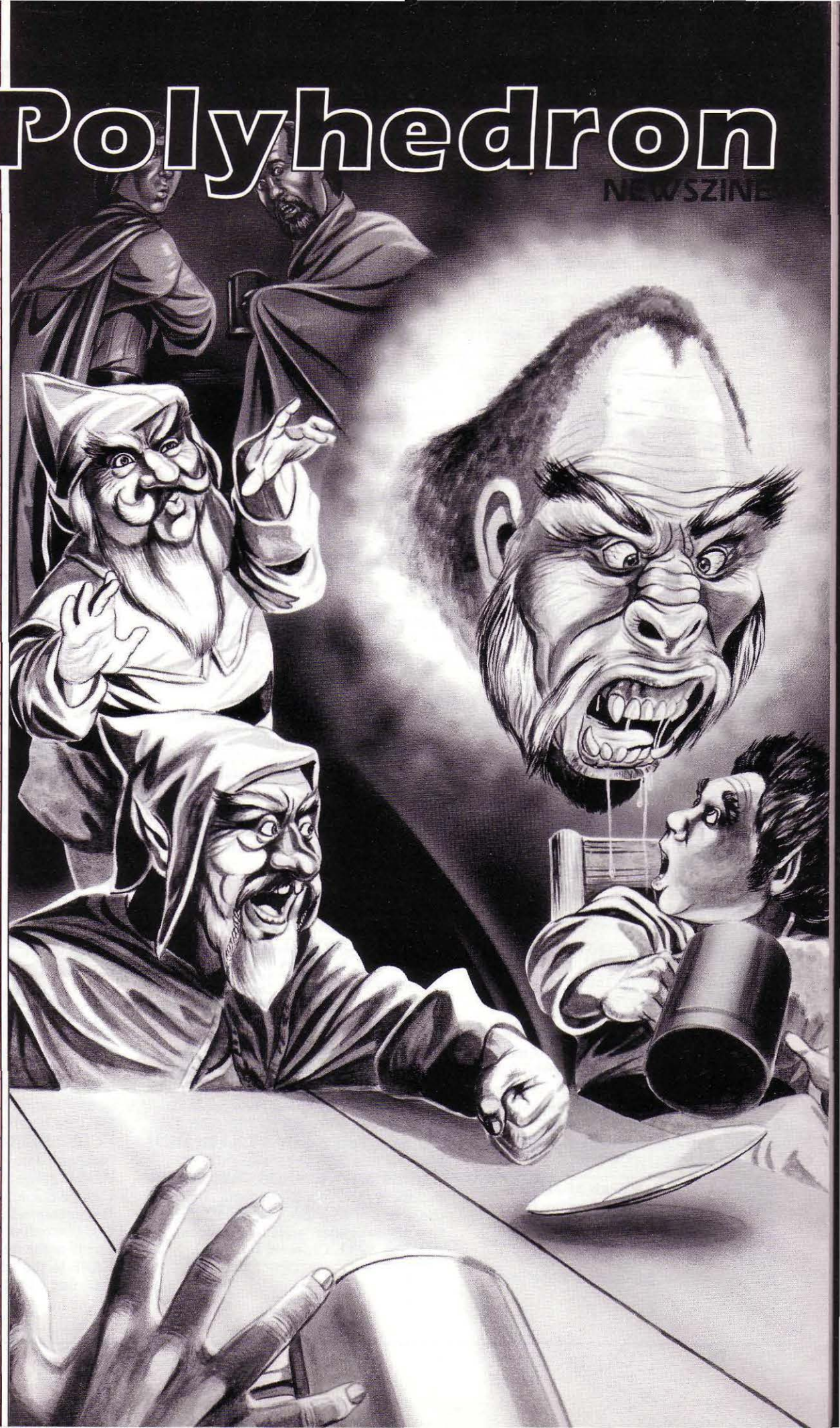
NEWSZINE



RPGA™

NETWORK

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Conventions

COAST CON XII, March 17-19
A large AD&D® game open tournament is among the RPGA Network events featured at this gamers' paradise. The convention will be held at the Mississippi Gulf Coast Coliseum Convention Center in Biloxi, MS. For more information contact Coast Con XII, P.O. Box 4194, Biloxi, MS 39535.

MARCH FANTASY REVEL, March 31-April 2
The Fourth Annual March Fantasy Revel at the Kenosha, WI Holiday Inn will feature a wargaming area, a silent used games auction, dealer's area, and many role playing events. Featured RPGA Network tournaments include an AD&D game Grand Masters, AD&D game Masters, AD&D game Feature, TOP SECRET/S.I.™ Feature, and MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ game Feature. Other activities include a workshop on writing tournaments and POLYHEDRON™ Newszine articles, a Gamers Banquet (make your reservations early), and a RPGA Network members meeting. Special guests are Harold Johnson, Jean Rabe, and Skip Williams. Fees are $10 a day or $20 for the weekend. Network members receive a $2 discount. For more information contact Keith Polster, 2432 Park Ave., Apt. 6, West Bend, WI 53095, or Janice Ours, P.O. Box 840, Silver Lake, WI 53170.

CONNCON, April 1-2
Held at the Quality Inn in Danbury, CT, this convention features role playing, board gaming, and miniatures. An RPGA Network tournament will be held, open to all players. In addition, an RPGA Network event will be held for members only. A benefit event will be held with proceeds going to the American Heart Association. Preregistration is $10 for the weekend. On site registration will be $15. For more information, preregistration, and game master information, write to Hobby Center, 366 Main St., Danbury, CT 06810.

STELLARCON, March 31-April 2
This science fiction and fantasy convention will be held at Elliot University Center on the University of North Carolina Greensboro campus. Activities include workshops, tournaments, and open gaming. For more information write to, SF3, Box 4, EUC, UNCG, Greensboro, NC 27412.

GYRPHCON '89, April 1-2
The University of Guelph in Guelph, Ontario Canada, is the site of this gaming convention featuring an AD&D® game tournament and many other activities. Contact Christopher Nunan, University Centre, Room 266, University of Guelph, Guelph, Ontario CA NIG2WI.

SCRYCON '89, April 8
The seventh annual one-day event sponsored by the Seekers of the Crystal Monolith Gaming Club, will be held at the Red Hook Methodist Church in Red Hook, NY. Events include an AD&D game tournament, miniature painting contest, and a used game market. Admission is $5. For more information, write to Scrycon '89, PO Box 896, Pleasant Valley, NY 12569.

DEF-CON I, April 15-16
Special events at this gaming bash include Network tournaments, group vs. group role-playing, computer tournaments, and many open events. Preregistration is $3. Fees are $5 at the door. Event fees range from free to $3. For more information or to register, contact David Machin, 719 Juniper Road, Valparaiso, IN 46383.

SYNDICON three, April 21-23
RPGA Network AD&D Features, Masters, Grand Masters tournaments, a MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ game tournament, GAMMA WORLD® game tournament, and a DC Heroes event are among a few of the activities at this gaming festival in Carol Stream, IL. Also featured is a character contest. Bring your favorite character (typed, of course), and a prize will be awarded for the top entries. Special guests include Rick Reid, Fluffy Quest creator; Jean Rabe, RPGA Network coordinator; Skip Williams, Sage Advice columnist; and Mayfair and FASA representatives. Registration fees are $15. Network members receive a $2 discount. Costs at the door are $6 a day. For more information or to register write to Syndicon, P.O. Box 39A1, Chicago, IL 60690.

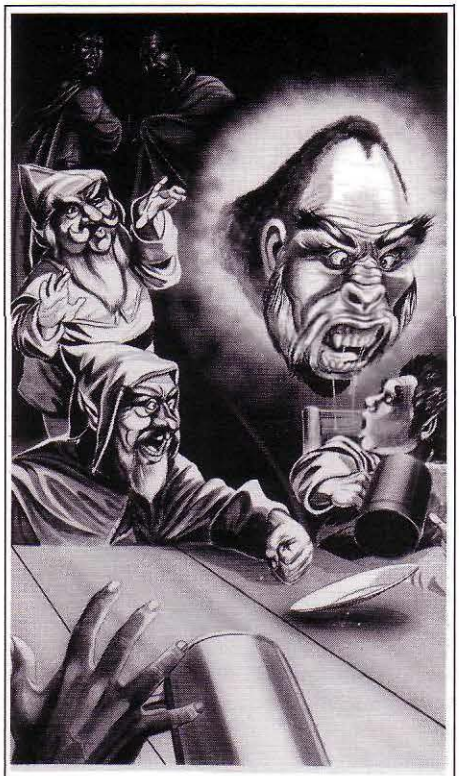
COSCON 89, April 22
Sponsored by the Circle of Swords RPGA Network club, this one-day gaming event will feature RPGA Network AD&D game tournaments and a Paranoia tournament. It will be held at Bulter Community College in Butler, PA. Other events include board games, miniature events, and a painting contest. Registration is $6 until March 31; $8 thereafter and at the door. For more information or to preregister, contact COSCON, c/o Dave Schnur, 127 Crosslands Road, Butler, PA 16001.

THE AMERICAN GAMES FAIR, May 11-13
RPGA Network tournaments will be offered at New York's first consumer and trade show at Madison Square Garden Exhibition Rotunda. The first day of the show is a "trade day only," however the doors will open to the public for the remaining two days. For more information, contact Mary Gray at CCE LTD., 122 E 42nd St., Suite 1121, New York, NY 10168, 212-867-5159.

NICON IV, May 19-21
The College of Dupage in Glen Ellyn, IL is the site of Network tournaments, miniature events, board games, and many more activities. For information, contact Keith Polster, 2432 Park Ave., Apt. 6, West Bend, WI 53095.

INTERDIMENSIONS I May 26-28
A weekend of gaming and science fiction await at the Omni Netherland in Cincinnati. Among the Network tournaments featured will be a three-round AD&D game event and a two-round TOP SECRET/S.I.™ event. Artist Gary M. Williams is among the several guests scheduled. Registration fees are $25 until Feb. 25 and $30 thereafter. For more information contact INTERDIMENSIONS I, P.O. Box 266, Batesville, IN 47006 or call 812-852-4542.

GLATHRICON June 9-11
This annual event, sponsored by the Evansville Gaming Guild, will be held at the Executive Inn in Evansville, IN. The RPGA Network will sponsor AD&D game Grand Masters, Masters, and Feature tournaments, a MARVEL SUPER HEROES game Feature and Masters, James Bond event, Joe Martin AD&D game benefit for the American Cancer Society, and a Runequest event. Registration fees are $12 to April 1 and $16 thereafter. For preregistration forms or for more information, send a SASE to the Evansville Gaming Guild, P.O. Box 15414, Evansville, IN 47716.



About the Cover

Greetings and hallucinations! Two gnomes have some fun with illusions in a local tavern, illustrating our feature, Playing Illusions. Art by Jim Holloway.

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Volume 9, Number 2
Issue #46, March, 1989

SPECIAL MODULE FEATURE

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An evil Web plot threatens to shake the Hollywood movie industry and ruin the production of the latest John Stock thriller. This TOP SECRET/S.I.™ game scenario was a Masters tournament at GEN CON® Game Fair 21. Illustrations by Jim Holloway.

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There are things players don't like to hear DMs say. Here are some of those phrases.

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This dining establishment located near the wharfs serves up fine food, a friendly atmosphere, and lets diners purchase jewelry while they wait.

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This new NPC class could fit right into your city campaign - if you don't take it too seriously.

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Get your pens and pencils ready. You could win a fine addition to your wardrobe.

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Notes From HQ

Congratulations From a Sad Soapbox

HQ's warmest congratulations go to RPGA™ Network member Peter Hague of Carol Stream, IL. Peter is the grand prize winner in the 1987 membership drive. He brought in the most new members between August 1 and November 1, and will receive a free trip to this summer's GEN CON® Game Fair, which will include transportation, lodging, and admission to the convention. Peter is a veteran DM for the Network, judging AD&D® game tournaments for the past several GEN CON Game Fairs and other conventions in the midwest. He is among the Network's highest-ranked game masters and has done much to support our organization. In addition, he is the Newszine's newest columnist. The first entry in his *On Your Feet* game advice column appeared in issue #45.

For the membership drive we divided the world into several regions and said we would give a first and second place prize in each region. First place is a $250 gift certificate to the Mail Order Hobby Shop, and Second place is a $100 gift certificate to the Mail Order Hobby Shop. Consult the *Notes From HQ* column in issue #42 for a detailed listing of what states and countries are in which regions. The winners are:

Region 1: Chris McGuigan of California, first place, Phillip Wright of California, second; Region 2: Dennis McLaughlin of Tennessee, first place, Aaron Goldblatt of Texas, second; Region 3: Peter Hague, first place, William Sherman of Illinois, second; Region 4: Gary Bulik of Pennsylvania, first place; Jim Blitz of Maryland, second; Region 5: Malcolm Wood of Canada, first place; Angela Wood of Canada, second place.

Congratulations to the winners. Their efforts are appreciated.

I'm sad, however, that more members did not participate in the drive. We have thousands of members throughout the world who enjoy the benefits of being in the RPGA™ Network. Each member receives the POLYHEDRON™ Newszine, and many of our members compete in Network-sanctioned tournaments and activities. Despite that, only 33 members were involved in the membership drive. And several of those 33 members only brought in one new member each.

I don't understand the lack of participation. Some members I quizzed said they didn't try because they didn't think they had a chance at winning. With attitudes like that they were right. What a shame; any effort would have benefited the Network.

I've always believed that if you enjoy and appreciate an organization, you will do what you can to help that organization. I know that not everyone can game master tournaments at a convention, volunteer to work at conventions, or write for the Newszine. But I have a hard time believing that people can't help out by promoting the organization and encouraging others to join. Nearly all of us know gamers who do not belong to the Network. Would it hurt too much to take a few minutes to tell them about the Network or show them a POLYHEDRON Newszine? Many of us probably also know gamers who used to belong to the Network when the Newszine was behind and tournament results seldom were logged into HQ's computer. Would it be so difficult to tell those people that things have changed? The Newszine has been on schedule for more than a year. And it's not going to fall behind schedule again. Tournament results are logged into the computer on a regular, timely basis.

I believe that you get more out of an organization if you put something into it. And it is past time that some of us start putting a little effort into helping our ranks swell. In last issue's Notes From HQ column I challenged everyone to make a resolution to recruit *at least* one person to join the Network. The challenge still stands. It is essential that the RPGA Network grow. More members means more income. And that means we can afford to produce RPGA Network merchandise, expand our programs, and improve the services we offer now.

I'm not trying to put all the responsibility for growth on the membership's shoulders. HQ has been advertising the RPGA Network in DUNGEON® Adventures, DRAGON® Magazine, AMAZING® Stories, and through several other avenues. And those efforts have been paying off. We have been attracting gamers who were not aware of the Network. And HQ is going to increase those promotional efforts. But I'm asking for your help. Do it for the Network. Do it for the hobby. Do it for yourself. Ultimately you'll reap rewards if the Network can get the members and income to expand.

Perhaps many of you think I'm off base, that I've got my head stuck in some dungeon and I'm being unrealistic. So talk to me. I want to know what you think about my appeal for your help in recruiting members. Do you want me to drop this subject? Do you have suggestions for gaining more members? There's a POLYHEDRON Newszine letters column just waiting to be filled with your replies.

New Fees

Starting September 1st, 1989, HQ will begin charging conventions for sanctioned tournaments. The fee for all tournament scenarios supplied by HQ will be $5.00 per round. (The fee is waived for any scenario the convention supplies itself; scenarios still must be submitted to HQ for approval.) The $5.00 per round fee is in addition to the $2.00 per round copy fee HQ already charges. (The $5.00 fee gets you one copy; additional copies cost $2.00.) The $5 fee for all tournaments is waived if a convention supplies at least one acceptable tournament.

We regret having to charge this new fee, but tournament requests are booming, and the Network can no longer afford to provide free tournaments.

HQ still provides gift certificates for the winners of Network-sanctioned tournaments.

A Good Con

This past fall Newszine Assistant Editor Skip Williams and I attended VilleCon, a first-time convention held on the campus of Northwest Missouri State University in Maryville. (You're just hearing about it now because of the Newszine's publication schedule.) Convention Coordinator Tim Beach, a graduate student at the university, began

(Continued on page 30)

Fifty Phrases

Quotes Players Fear Most

by Vince Garcia

1. "A one. Let me get out my critical chart."
2. "What was that sword?"
3. "Who stepped into the room first?"
4. "Give me a saving throw."
5. "What do you need to save vs. death?"
6. "What's the alignment of whomever picked up the sword?"
7. "Gee, it's not there...of course you didn't notice the kender who passed you earlier."
8. "What's your AC from the rear?"
9. "Undead make no noise."
10. "What was your level of experience?"
11. "Who's evil in the party?"
12. "Sorry, the book says...."
13. "I don't care what the book says."
14. "Since your character's never seen a (insert name of monster), you don't know it (insert special attack)."
15. "I don't care how attentive you were being, the (insert monster name) rolled surprise."
16. "The drow archers naturally shoot at the 22 Comeliness gray elf."
17. "If you can shoot past the middle rank of the party, so can the monsters."
18. "Anyone remember if there's a saving throw against an *arrow of slaying*?"
19. "What's your character's alignment?"
20. "Did you make your detrap roll?"
21. "Next time I play in your game, I'm rolling up a bow specialist!"
22. "You rolled a 20? Good! Is that under your Dex?"
23. "I don't care what the *Sage Advice* column says, I interpret that to mean...."
24. "The DMG says a dragon with surprise can use its breath weapon once each segment."
25. "How many hit points did you say you had?"
26. "Who's on guard in the camp?"
27. "I don't care what your Charisma bonus is, a 01 reaction is still a 01 reaction.
28. "Lawful or not, evil is still evil!"
29. "You guys wanted to take on one more room."
30. "All the pluses in the world don't help if the monster is out of range."
31. "This time the monsters attack from the party's rear. Who's back there?"
32. "In this game there's no such thing as dodging a blow."
33. "If you can do it, the monster can!"
34. "Go ahead — write an article on what a stupid rule that is. You still took the damage!"
35. "I don't care what it was like in Vietnam, this is the D&D® game!"
36. "Funny, that's what I said in your game last week. Obviously we were wrong, huh?"
37. "I announced at the beginning — what you say, your character says."
38. "I don't care if you do remember getting that (insert potion, magic item, etc.). If it's not written down, you don't have it."
39. "I don't remember saying you were healed up."
40. "It's your turn to buy the pizza."
41. "You're gonna run from the monster? Fine. What's your encumbrance and movement rate?"
42. "I keep telling you it's called Que Shu! The next time someone calls it Que Sanh, I'm going to (insert favorite act of violence)!"
43. "Dice don't lie."
44. "You were the one who said you wanted to find a vorpal sword."
45. "It's not my fault you guys are stupid."
46. "Needless to say, the paladin looks over at the elf with a displeased expression on his face."
47. "I don't care if this is the 27th name your character has used this year, the assassins still tracked you down!"
48. "I don't care how many hundreds of mummies you've killed — you still have to save vs. fear."
49. "Did I ask for your opinion?"
50. "Don't you ever play anything but (insert favorite character class or race)?"

❑

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Junk Bonds

A TOP SECRET/S.I.™ game adventure

Illustration by Jim Holloway

by Mike Selinker

Administrator's Background

Girls, guns, and gadgets sell, and the 144 MegaGrand films of Ivan Lemming's John Stock, Agent Double-O-Nothing, are best sellers. Each film has out grossed the last, even though each uses the same plot in a different setting. The newest film, *Diamonds Kill For Never,* is expected to draw Double-O-Nothing's drooling groupies to the box office and fill MegaGrand Studios' coffers as never before.

Now, enter the Web. Though unknown to John Stock's fans, the Web flourishes even under the bright lights of Hollywood. In Los Angeles, however, the Web is locked in internecine combat. A Web Operations Manager, Bugsy Berzerkly, and his operatives have threatened to go public with the terrorist group's existence unless they are given a greater percentage of profits from an upcoming Web operation, a movie based on past Web activities. In reply, furious Web directors have ordered the rebels silenced. The rebels' current operation is on the set of *Diamonds Kill For Never,* where they hope to take over the film industry and thus the world. Loyal Web agents already have killed four rebels.

The killings have brought the operation to the attention of Bonnie Mulcahy, the Orion Foundation's Los Angeles branch director. She picked up a low-level Web bagman carrying a copy of the master print of *Diamonds Kill For Never.* The man refused to tell Bonnie anything about the film, citing his constitutional rights. Bonnie sent him to the Section in San Francisco, where his constitutional rights could be violated without peril. Curious about the film (although dreading its quality), Bonnie viewed the print four times, noticing on the last viewing that three of the Web murders appeared on camera, but not overtly. She immediately called for the PCs to investigate the matter and make Hollywood safe for unbridled capitalism again.

The Web agents, however, know two things that the Orion Foundation does not. First, that more rebel agents are in need of execution. Second, that the Orion Foundation has a copy of the film. (They guessed this when the bagman did not complete his delivery.) Loyal Web agents have been directed to go to the murder sites to make sure no clues remain and to unobtrusively kill the

surviving rebels — to prove no one escapes from the Web. For Bugsy Berzerkly, the Web has made an extra effort: Anton Leone, assassin.

The PCs can turn the failed Web revolt into a coup for the Orion Foundation. All they have to do is save at least one disloyal Web agent. The rebels, while not well informed about the business side of the Web, will gladly spill what they know to the Foundation in return for their lives, a bargain the Foundation will be willing to keep.

To save the rebels, the PCs must realize that the loyal Web agents are using the cues in *Diamonds Kill For Never* to signal each other. While working to prevent their own deaths, the PCs must be able to see into the corners of the screen of life to catch the hidden details. These details should not be noticed unless the PCs are actively looking for them. By changing these details, the PCs will be able to rewrite the script for a happy ending.

Bonnie Mulcahy, Orion Foundation Los Angeles Branch Office Director:

STR 35; INT 59; REF 43; WIL 60; CON 42; MOV 47; DEX 52; CRU Some; LOY Some; PAS High; PIE Low; SAN Some; SEL High

ADV/DIS Allergies (1, gold lamé) SKILLS Electronics (0/59%), Computer Technician (4/79%), Basic Firearms (0/26%), Interrogation (0/60%), Driving/Automobile (0/52%), Horsemanship (0/47%), Photography (0/59%), Basic Science (0/30%), Electrical Engineer (2/69%) WEAPONS Generally none, but sometimes a .22 silenced self-load pistol

Bonnie Mulcahy, 33, was a strong-willed Silicon Valley businesswoman who worked for the Orion Foundation, ferreting out Web secrets from the databanks of major corporations. When she inadvertently compromised her computer cover identity to Web hackers, she asked for a transfer to some other base, preferring another low-profile job. She was made Los Angeles branch office director instead. She hates her new job and wants nothing more than to return to computer programming. Computers may not be much for conversation, she thinks, but at least they don't wear sunglasses and smile all the time. She is not happy about having the branch office in a tanning salon called Suntastic Tanning, and leaves the operation of the salon entirely to her assistant, Mabel Birkswich. Bonnie is quite capable of exploding at the slightest provocation; although she is working on restraining her passions.

Players' Briefing

The August morning sun beats through the lowered shades of Suntastic Tanning's back office in Los Angeles. You sit quietly as Orion Foundation branch office director Bonnie Mulcahy tears at her auburn hair. "I hate Hollywood! Why do they always stick me with assignments where I have to deal with Hollywood! "Let's do lunch," they say. "Fab to scope you out, babe." "Have my agent call your agent." Where do these people come from, Neptune? I hate this! It's not like the Web could locate a couple of operations at Anaheim, or the Valley, or even Burbank! Oh no, it always has to be Hollywood!"

You have learned to expect ranting from Bonnie every time an assignment involving Hollywood comes along. There are other assignments, of course, but a fair number have occurred in the brightest section of the City of Angels. You well remember the Web-sponsored punk rock band, Velveeta Mambo, which sent subconscious messages through their amplifiers at Club Detox, until you pulled the plug. You also thwarted the Web's insidious plan to counterfeit the stars outside Grauman's Chinese Theatre and sell them to tourists for astronomical prices. Of course, the most celebrated mission was the infamous "You Loot the Mint" game show incident, where those nasty Websters tried to steal all of the prizes and thus doom the age-old American path to success — playing guessing games for millions on network television. But these are the missions that Bonnie Mulcahy would like to forget. She liked it much better when she was an Orion Foundation computer jock in Silicon Valley, before she was asked take over the branch office in L.A. Organizational hierarchies being what they were, Bonnie couldn't refuse, but you know she doesn't fit in with the Tinseltown crowd. After all, she doesn't even own a video tape recorder.

Bonnie stops her tirade against Hollywood for a moment to catch her breath. She suddenly realizes you are all staring at her. She combs her hair with her hand, adjusts her turtleneck, and says, "You probably want to know what this is about, don't you? All right," she snaps, seizing a motion picture film canister from her desk and plunking it into a projector. The label is emblazoned with three slanted black zeroes, the last zero is shaped like an archery target. You know adventure awaits, for in front of you is the latest masterpiece in Hollywood's most profitable series: Ivan Lemming's John Stock, Agent Double-O-Nothing.

The PCs are free to ask questions. Bonnie will give them a full briefing, although she will not enjoy doing so, see below.

Part One

Opening Sequence — Suntastic Tanning

Bonnie Mulcahy announces that time is short, and asks one of the PCs to hit the lights as she sets up the projector.

The room will be absolutely dark during the film, so note-taking will be difficult. The Administrator should feel free to take all writing utensils away from the players unless they promise to write with their eyes closed. When the PCs are settled, Bonnie flips on the projector and shines white light on the screen, then steps forward to begin the briefing.

The image on the screen goes from white to black, as an orchestral bossanova thunders along. In a garish canopy of stars, the logo, "A MegaGrand Studios and Grizzly R. Asparagus extravaganza," appears, followed by the three Double-O-Nothing zeroes. An arrow thwacks into the center of the bullseye zero and expands to produce a bright orange backdrop showing the words, "Ivan Lemming's John Stock, Agent Double-O-Nothing in... *DIAMONDS KILL FOR NEVER!*" The music continues, as Bonnie explains, "I don't understand the title either. I think MegaGrand just combined some of the titles of other Stock films to make more money. Don't ask me why this tripe sells, because it certainly isn't anything like real espionage. We'll never get gadgets like that, and what agent in his right mind would go around telling everyone his name, for Pete's sake. "Stock,

John Stock."" As Bonnie speaks, dashingly handsome Reginald Less, the 14th English actor to play the debonair superspy appears on screen. He has a jutting jaw, perfect white teeth, and not too much paunch. Less, dressed in a neatly pressed tuxedo, is standing in a windstorm atop the Hollywood Bowl. A delta-wing stealth jet is bearing down on him, strafing the top of the band shell.

Bonnie regains her composure and says, "Um, that's Reginald Less, the latest has-been british commercials actor who's playing Stock for the 15th or 16th time. He's absolutely gorgeous — er, to some star-struck teenagers, that is. But that's not important. Here, watch this."

Less leaps off the roof onto a catwalk, somersaults through the air, and lands in the oboe section of the orchestra pit, disrupting a performance of Puccini's *Turandot.* The plane, meanwhile, smashes into the roof. But the crash doesn't appear to harm any bystanders. Less brushes a touch of falling plaster off of his still-unwrinkled tux.

"There!" Bonnie shouts. "Hold it; rewind it a bit. Slowly."

Any PC can rewind the film with an INT check. If the roll fails, Bonnie will stomp over to the projector and turn it to slow rewind herself. The plane will go from a blue-orange fireball to a completely intact fighter flying backward from the shell. As it goes up, Bonnie will say, "Okay, okay, just a little more. There." She will stop the film mid-frame, with the plane suspended, and sit triumphantly, waiting patiently for the PCs to notice what she has seen.

"Well, don't you see it?" she urges. "There, in the upper left hand corner."

Characters wishing to see anything in the corner must go up to the screen and look very closely. There, a small helicopter hovers several hundred yards behind the plane. There is a man on the helicopter's skids. If the projector is turned on, the man will be seen to fall from the copter and out of the picture boundaries. No details will be determinable.

"That's not the only one, though," adds Bonnie, fast-forwarding the film several hundred feet. "Here, watch this scene." Reginald Less is standing behind one of the mammoth letters on the Hollywood sign overlooking the city from Mount Hollywood. Hundreds of enemy agents are shooting at him, but they don't seem to be damaging the sign. Less is in a white tuxedo with purple cummerbund. He has a .44 magnum in his left hand and a cocktail waitress in the right. He fires once, but no bullets. He is unruffled, and pulls out what looks like a vitamin pill. He squeezes the capsule and it blossoms into a tank. Stock leaps into the tank, destroys the enemy agents, and drives away, blowing a kiss to the cocktail waitress, who waves back. "There it is again!" Bonnie shouts, although the catalyst is once again invisible. "In the lower right corner this time."

As Bonnie stops the film, it will be possible to see at the bottom of the hill a man in combat fatigues shooting another man wearing a gray business suit in the chest. This scene quickly fades from camera range.

"I found another one, too," Bonnie says, again fast-forwarding the film. In this scene, Less nurses a martini as he walks through the Universal Studios tour site. The place appears to be abandoned, but the lights suddenly spring to life, as does a larger-than-celluloid model of a giant ape. The ape tries to snatch up Less in its massive paw, but Less leaps up to the ape's shoulder, pulls the olive spear from his martini, and uses it to open the ape's brain compartment. A five-second electrosurgery later, Less marches his ape to the tour train, where the chief enemy agent, a rich man in a suit made of gold rings, orders his henchmen to fire on the ape. Less shouts, "You're not getting away, Goldringer! Not in that outfit!" The ape picks up the train car and begins to climb the Empire State Building model. Unseen by Stock, one of the enemy agents is climbing the ape toward Stock's position while the ape climbs the building. The other men continue to fire on Stock from inside the train car as Goldringer shouts commands, becoming more hysterical as the ape climbs. When the ape has reached the top, Stock pauses to reprimand Goldringer for his evil ways. Goldringer pleads for his life as the ape slowly raises the train. The scene cuts to the climbing henchman who has stopped on the ape's shoulder behind Stock and is taking careful aim at Stock's back. Bonnie stops the film at this moment.

"There, you can see this one on your own, can't you?" asks Bonnie.

If the PCs look, they can see a man being hanged from a boom mike in the far background, although it is difficult to make out details.

If the PCs want to watch the rest of the scene with the ape, Bonnie will reluctantly run the tape for them. Just before the villain can shoot, Stock twitches the olive spear in the ape's brain, causing the ape to shrug his shoulder, and the villain falls to his death, followed closely by the train car carrying Goldringer and his henchmen.

Bonnie turns off the projector and turns on the lights. "Insipid film, I know. Believe me, I had to watch this malarkey all the way through four times. We picked this off a Web bagman named Pinky Starboard, who we sent up to the Section in San Francisco. He wouldn't tell us about the film, and I don't think we have time to wait for results of an interrogation. The Web obviously has something to do with these murders or Starboard wouldn't have a copy of the master print with him. I want you people to go to the sites of the shots — the Hollywood Bowl, Mount Hollywood, and Universal Studios — and see if any clues are still there. These scenes were shot and edited yesterday, as I understand it, and the cast isn't filming until this afternoon. Just hurry, because we wouldn't want the Web to get rid of the clues. I'm going to be here waiting for the report on Starboard, and, I guess, probably watch the film again. What I go through for this job! Call me when you get done."

Bonnie will try to answer any questions the PCs have, although she does not know any Hollywood history or the details of past John Stock blockbusters. Bonnie does not keep any Ganymede Bureau equipment in her office, and only owns a silenced .22 double action self-load pistol. She cannot lend the PCs any weaponry without requisitioning it from Mentex Technologies in San Francisco. She will not do this unless she considers something critical. Further-

more, any equipment will take at least eight hours to arrive, except in the direst of circumstances. She does not think there is time for a detailed viewing of *Diamonds Kill For Never,* but if the PCs do view it they will see Stock preform a series of disjointed, improbable bits of heroics at famous L.A. landmarks, such as Sunset Strip, the Santa Monica Mountains, Dodger Stadium, the University of California at Los Angeles, Palos Verdes Estates, and the Hollywood Park Race Track. The film does not yet have a climax. The climactic scene at Los Angeles International Airport will be filmed on the set at MegaGrand this afternoon.

The PCs are free to go the three sites in any order. Suntastic Tanning is in the Boyle Heights region of Los Angeles on Wilshire Boulevard. The PCs can either take Hollywood Boulevard northwest about twenty minutes to the Hollywood Bowl, or the Golden State Freeway north about the same distance to Mount Hollywood and the sign. Universal Studios is 10 minutes northwest of the Bowl on Hollywood Boulevard. Considering only the order in the film, the Hollywood Bowl is Scene One, the Hollywood sign is Scene Two, and Universal Studios is Scene Three. If the PCs check in after visiting at least two of the sites, Bonnie will have spotted another scene with a murder in it. This is described in the Intermission. The newly discovered murder took place at Dodger Stadium. The Stadium is south and southeast of the other three sites, but just a few blocks northwest of Suntastic Tanning.

Scene One — The Hollywood Bowl

The Hollywood Bowl, a 20,000-seat outdoor theater, shows no sign of being destroyed by an impact with a stealth jet. Nonetheless, the *Diamonds Kill For Never* scene was filmed here, and a rebel Web agent was killed here. A newseye helicopter is several blocks from the Bowl, but should not be noticed unless someone specifically asks whether there are any aircraft in the area.

Currently, there is no performance at the bowl. A crotchety old security guard, Jake Furley, stands at the gate, preventing unauthorized entrance. If the PCs wish to get inside, they will have to get past Jake, who takes his job very seriously. He cannot be bribed, but his poor hearing makes stealth a useful tactic against him. If the PCs suggest that they are custodians, he will tell them that they can join their fellows inside.

Inside the band shell are three Web agents disguised as custodians. Jake let them in. They are thugs, with statistics 30; and Basic Firearms skill; armed with spearguns disguised as janitors' brooms. They are expecting Orion Foundation agents to come to the scene, but will not fire until they suspect the PCs are those agents. There are also three Web thugs in the newseye helicopter, as well as the disloyal Renslow Boggs (statistics 35; Electronics skill level 3), who was working for the Web on the set of *Diamonds Kill For Never* until his unfaithfulness was discovered. The thugs intend to kill Boggs by throwing him from the helicopter.

If the PCs do not call attention to themselves, the landbound thugs will give the all-clear to their associates in the helicopter. They will contact them by sending a battery-powered model of a stealth jet (Killjoy Toys, $79.95, batteries not included) into the air. One thug will dip the plane in luminescent paint, and another will use a remote control to send the plane into the air and crash it into the band shell. At this signal, the three Web thugs in the helicopter (statistics 30; Basic Firearms and Helicopter pilot skill level 1; armed with .45 self-loading pistols) will attack Boggs. After a few moments of struggle, the thugs will push him out, and he will fall to his doom unless the PCs intervene. If the thugs complete the hit, they will fly away behind the hills and hide the copter. The thugs inside the band shell will scatter after the deed is done.

If any Web agents are captured, they will know nothing about who contacted them or why Boggs was marked for murder. The weapons were provided by an unknown source, as was the helicopter and jet model. None of the thugs are willing to die for the cause, as they don't even know the Web exists. Boggs, on the other hand, will be willing to spill his guts to Orion if his life is saved and he is promised sanctuary. He was a low-level Web operative working as a soundman on the set of *Diamonds Kill For Never,* under the supervision of Bugsy Berzerkly, the assistant director. Berzerkly spoke to him and a number of others about taking a greater percentage of the royalties from an upcoming Web film, but then the others started disappearing yesterday. Berzerkly has not been seen in two days. If Boggs is brought back to Bonnie Mulcahy, she will begin to make arrangements for him to be shipped to the Section in San Francisco for a thorough personality reconstruction.

Scene Two — The Hollywood Sign

The HOLLYWOOD sign on Mount Hollywood towers over the city and easily can be seen from the nearby Hollywood Bowl. There are five Web agents on the 495-foot hill, four are in the tall grasses above the hill.

These are mercenary commandos (statistics 40, except INT 30 and DEX 35; Basic Firearms and level 2 weapons skills; armed with 7.62 sniper rifles, silenced .357 snub-noses, smoke grenades, and hunting knives).

They have bound and gagged Willie Tracklemeyer, a rebel Web agent, who they intend to shoot when the hill is free of people. Tracklemeyer has statistics 35; and Business/Economics skill level 2.

The other Web operative on the mount is Heather Fayerwether, a budding starlet who has appeared in several commercials. Heather, who is dressed in the pert black and white outfit of a cocktail waitress, is resting against the Y in HOLLYWOOD. She has statistics 35 except INT 25 and DEX 30; she is unarmed; and has the Attractive Appearance (2) and Sensuality (2) advantages and Phobia of Guns disadvantage (4); as well as Acting skill level 1. Heather has no idea she is working for the Web, assuming that someone is filming her with a long-range camera from a nearby observatory. She has been hired to go to the sign and wave to the mercenaries if there is no one on the mount. She will have to wait until a number of tourists in loud T-shirts finish shutterbugging the hill, and may also have to wait for the PCs as well. If they come to the sign to ask her questions, she will be flustered — they are interrupting her big break. She will want them to move from her scene. Though an actress, she is not especially effective at communication, and will turn beet red and call the PCs all sorts of names if they do not leave.

Meanwhile, the commandos on the hill are waiting for Heather's signal. They will get antsy if the PCs occupy her too long, and will use binoculars to try to assess the situation. If anything concretely suggests that the PCs are Orion Foundation agents, they will

sharpshoot the PCs. Heather will panic if she is in the area, screaming loudly. The letters of the sign provide hard cover. Security guards at the observatory will call for police if shooting breaks out, and the PCs will have to be careful if they want to avoid arrest. If the commandos are forced to flee, they will try to assassinate Tracklemeyer to complete their mission.

If captured, the commandos will be tight lipped, suggesting that they know more than they actually do. They were hired anonymously to kill some movie people, and have no conception of what the Web is. They were all involved in the shooting of the gray-suited businessman. There is a wedding ring and some blood at the foot of the hill, verifying that a murder did indeed take place there. The PCs will find these clues automatically if they search the foot of the hill. Heather Fayerwether knows that a "director" called her on short notice, had a waitress costume delivered to her (although she already had one from her day job), and told her to pose at the sign. Though she may need protection, she has no useful information for the PCs. Willie Tracklemeyer will be very talkative if rescued. He was a media assistant for the production of *Diamonds Kill For Never,* and is one of the Web agents who agreed with Bugsy Berzerkly to push for more royalties. Tracklemeyer knows that the personnel director for the movie, another rebel Web agent, disappeared yesterday. This man, who was responsible for bringing so many Web agents to the set of *Diamonds Kill For Never,* was the man in the gray suit killed during the Mount Hollywood shootout scene. Tracklemeyer does not know where Bugsy Berzerkly is. If Tracklemeyer is turned over to Bonnie Mulcahy, she will question him, learn nothing new, and then send him to San Francisco.

Scene Three — Universal Studios

Universal City, the site of Universal Studios, is home to the most popular motion picture studio tour in the country. A tour bus drives through cowboy-and-Indian shootouts, a rickety bridge that falls apart in an earthquake, and a newly-reconstructed model of a giant ape clutching the Empire State Building. This creature's hand reaches for the tour bus and threatens to crush the passengers, but the quick-witted bus driver swerves to avoid this doom. For *Diamonds Kill For Never,* special features were added to the ape to make its entire body move, and MegaGrand has graciously allowed Universal to keep these modifications for its exhibit.

The Web agent who designed the modifications, special effects genius Sparks Minicam, is at the ape site. Sparks has statistics 30, except INT 60 and DEX 45; Mechanical Aptitude (1), Nearsightedness (1), a host of Electronics skills; and no weapons. He is crouching in a specially-designed head compartment of the 70-foot ape. Across the room, Spectrex Garragible (statistics 35; Electronics skill 2), assistant to Sparks and a rebel Web agent, is gagged and tied to a support pillar. If the support pillar is smashed (by the giant ape's fist or otherwise), Spectrex will swing out from the wall and be hanged by the anchoring ropes.

Sparks intends to terrify Spectrex with the sight of a giant ape smashing the support beam to kill him. If Sparks sees people who draw attention to themselves as Orion Foundation agents (leaving the tour bus to find the site of the boom mike hanging definitely qualifies), he will cause the mechanical voice of the ape to grumble, "Owwion Foundation Fwwunkies!" If the PCs respond to this odd sound, Sparks will have the ape step forward and try to grab them. His primary target is Spectrex, however, and he will try to smash the support pillar if he can reach it.

The ape robot has vehicular statistics rather than human ones:

Max Speed 5; Accel 1; Handl -40; Brake 0; Prot -40; #Pass 1; Range 20.

The robot has a STR of 100 and REF and DEX of 10 for HTH purposes.

If the ape grabs someone, the character is trapped until he can be released. A paw is not capable of crushing, but a person can be dropped or thrown. The ape is clumsy, and can be toppled by ramming it with a bus, disorienting or killing the driver, or destroying a leg with a grenade or some similar means. See the vehicular crash table in the rules for results of these actions, although common sense must rule. Security guards will arrive 10 minutes after violence erupts, and will be inclined to detain anyone involved in wrecking a $100,000 ape.

If captured, Sparks will faint. He does not think of targets as human beings, but rather the payoff for a special effects job well done. He is a freelancer who takes the highest-paying and most challenging jobs available, regardless of their human cost. He knows absolutely nothing about the Web, and certainly not the details of this or any other operation. Spectrex knows less than Sparks does about the operation, but knows more about the Web because Bugsy Berzerkly told his allies of some of the details. He will be circumspect about giving details to anyone without an ironclad promise of safety, and has no intention of ever becoming involved in espionage again. He has no knowledge of Berzerkly's whereabouts. If taken to Suntastic Tanning, Bonnie will question him briefly and send him to San Francisco, if she is there at all. See "Intermission," below.

Intermission — Suntastic Tanning

About two hours after the PCs begin their travels through Hollywood, Bonnie Mulcahy discovers a fourth murder in the frames of *Diamonds Kill For Never.* The new murder is found in a scene at Dodger Stadium, where the Boys of Summer pit their might against the New York Yankees. Reginald Less, baseball bunny on each arm, debonairly munches peanuts in the bleachers. Suddenly, gunfire erupts from the Yankees dugout as enemy agents try to close down the World Series. The superspy calmly leaps down to the Dodgers dugout below him, commandeers a baseball pitching machine, and knocks out the enemies with 200-mph fastballs. In the frames where Stock bows before the cheering crowd, a quick glance to the Dodgers dugout shows a man beating another to death with a baseball bat.

As soon as Bonnie sees this, which will be when the PCs are not in the office, she will drop everything, grab her handgun, and speed to Dodger Stadium. Dodger Stadium is only a few blocks from Suntastic Tanning, so she will be there in minutes. Once there, she will be in a great deal of trouble.

If the PCs try to reach Bonnie after she finds this murder, they will receive no answer at her private number, and Suntastic will be empty on this hot summer day. In the office, the print of "Diamonds Kill For Never" will be projected on the wall, freeze-framed with John Stock in mid-bow before the crowd. Anyone carefully studying the frame will be able to see the beating. Smart PCs will review the scene before rushing to Dodger Stadium.

Scene Four — Dodger Stadium

The Dodgers are not playing in the stadium today. When the PCs arrive, Bonnie Mulcahy, Bugsy Berzerkly, and the Web assassin Anton Leone are inside. Berzerkly is the former assistant director for *Diamonds Kill For Never,* and a Web Operations Manager. He is overweight, cannot use a gun, and has the following statistics: STR 35; REF 30; INT 50; WIL 55; CON 30; MOV 33; DEX 40

Since he held out for a greater cut of the royalties from the upcoming Web movie, his allies on the set of the Stock film were killed one by one. He went into hiding, but the elite assassin Anton Leone, a master of stealth and investigation, found him. Leone's superior — whom he prefers not to know — ordered him to bring Berzerkly here to the stadium and to torture him before killing him. Before he could begin the torture, however, Bonnie snuck into the stadium and tried to shoot Leone, but missed. Berzerkly escaped Leone's grasp, and a cat and mouse game began between the three, with Leone trying to kill Bonnie and Berzerkly, Bonnie trying to capture both but kill Leone if necessary, and Berzerkly trying to avoid the clutches of both.

In addition, there are 12 stadium security guards on duty who are trying to stop all three. One of the guards has contacted the police, but the police will not appear until the PCs wrap up the adventure.

The security guards have the following statistics: STR 30; REF 30; INT 30; WIL 40; CON 30; MOV 50; DEX 30

They have Basic Firearms, and each carries a .45 Colt autoloader. The guards pose no serious threat to the Web agents (but they do make good targets). The guards could pose a problem to the PCs, especially when they aim their pistols and order the PCs to put down their weapons.

Anton Leone has the following statistics: STR 60; REF 60; INT 50; WIL 55; CON 55; MOV 80; DEX 55.

ADV/DIS Athletic Ability (2), Good Balance (1) and no Moral Qualms whatsoever (1) SKILLS Electronics (0/50%), Knife Throwing (0/80%), Spear Throwing (0/80%), Basic Firearms (0/28%), Pistol (2/65%), Rifle (3/70%), Hand Grenade (2/65%), Basic Heavy Weapons (0/28%), Machine Gun (0/55%), Basic Melee (0/30%), Club/Ax/Blackjack (0/60%), Knife (2/70%), Spear (0/80%), Oriental Martial Arts (0/85%), Concealment (4/70%), Stealth (3/95%), Tracking (0/50%), Climbing (0/80%), Driving/Automobile (0/55%), Driving/Motorcycle (0/55%), and Swimming (0/80%) WEAPONS 5.56 NATO CAR-15, silenced 9mm Stechkin, stiletto, two gas grenades, one smoke grenade, dart gun loaded with poison (1d6/1), and light intensifier goggles.

Leone does not flinch, but he knows better than to open himself up for an attack. He moves quickly from place to place in combat, and is unlikely to remain in a place where he has been spotted.

Assuming the PCs go directly from the Suntastic Office to the stadium, they will find Bonnie holed up in the press box with one bullet left in her .22, Leone down in the pits near the Dodgers' dugout, and Berzerkly gasping for breath while hiding in the bleachers. A few guards are searching the bleachers. Bonnie, Leone, and Berzerkly are not readily visible. If the PCs blithely walk into the stadium, Leone is very likely to *take a shot at them, although Bonnie* may warn them if she sees them first. But if she does this, Leone will realize where she is and fire into the press box, although Bonnie will not be hurt. Bonnie will then go somewhere else to avoid being shot. If the PCs rush the Dodger dugout, they will be subjected to a hail of fire from Leone. Leone has several other weapons at his disposal, including grenades and hypodermic darts. He has modified a John Stock tactic for deadly purposes. He set up a pitching machine in the dugout to fire automatically at anyone coming near the dugout, even if Leone is elsewhere. The baseballs come at 200 miles per hour, and they do 1d6 damage per hit. The machine fires two shots per round. He must set the machine up in a visible place, and PCs who have viewed the film should figure out that it is a lethal trick when they see it. The machine can only fire in one direction, but Leone might be able to reach the machine and re-aim it. If the PCs get to it first, they may be able to use the machine on Leone.

Though Leone will want to kill the PCs, that is not his primary mission. If he is able to kill Berzerkly, he will probably settle for escaping without further conflict. Killing Berzerkly will be difficult, however, as he will be running from place to place as fast as his flabby legs can carry him. There are thousands of places to hide in Dodger Stadium, and Berzerkly probably will find all of them.

If the PCs and Bonnie capture Berzerkly, they can learn the entire story behind the rebel Web operation and all he knows about the Web, although the interrogation experts at Section in San Francisco will be required to remind Berzerkly of some of the things he has done for the Web. If Leone is rendered helpless or critically wounded, he will swallow a cyanide capsule to hasten his demise. Before he dies he will reveal the most dastardly plot of the Web in three raspy words: "Kill...Reginald Less."

Part Two

Second Interlude — Suntastic Tanning

When the encounter at the stadium is over, Bonnie will take the PCs and any prisoners back to Suntastic Tanning. If Bonnie did not survive the firefight, a new branch director is immediately sent from San Francisco, use Bonnie's statistics. If the Web's plot to kill Reginald Less was not revealed in Scene Four, Bonnie (or the new director) receives this information from a courier shortly after the PCs return to the salon (the Foundation has not been idle while the PCs have been working).

After arranging for the captured Web agents to be taken to San Francisco for interrogation, Bonnie must find a way to protect Reginald Less without revealing the existence of the Orion Foundation. Less has proven to be the greatest John Stock of all, and his death would dispirit millions of espionage fans around the world. Without them, the Orion Foundation would lose a great deal of financial support, and a healthy source of information — Stock fans frequently supply tips and leads about Web activities; the movies have put them on the lookout for nefarious, covert activities.

Bonnie cannot call the police and tell *them of the threat; that would reveal* the Orion Foundation, and would not guarantee the capture of more loyal Web agents.

The plan Bonnie will settle upon centers on the disappearance of the disloyal Web agents. For the *Diamonds Kill For Never* staff, the disappearances mean that nine valued employees have vanished from the set in one day. These include the assistant director (Bugsy Berzerkly), the special effects techni-

cian, one of his assistants, a media assistant, a soundman, a gaffer (lighting repairman), a personal assistant to lead actress Sandi Mandi, a costumer, and the personnel director. The last employee interests Bonnie most of all, because the murdered man's replacement will hire the replacements for all the rest. Bonnie does not know whether the Web has replacements waiting, but she does not intend to let them be put on the staff. Rather, she has six people in mind to take over some of those jobs — the PCs.

Bonnie tells the PCs her plan and asks their opinions. Obviously, an assistant director cannot be replaced by a newcomer, and she has no intention of sending Bugsy Berzerkly back to the set to be murdered. The personnel manager and the special effects chief are likely to have successors in the crew, Bonnie thinks, but the other six jobs are low-level positions that probably will be open. She repeats the jobs for the PCs: gaffer, media assistant, soundman, costumer, assistant to Sandi Mandi, and special effects assistant. Assuming they accede to the plan (they had better unless they have a better one), they may choose the jobs they wish to try out for, based on any criteria they choose. Bonnie may think of some criteria that the PCs may wish to use, including relevant skills and advantages, but it is up to the PCs.

Bonnie will let the PCs pump any captured Web agents for details about their jobs, but she will not leave the PCs alone with them. Any captured agent, even a loyal one, probably will be willing to talk about such things, if only to guarantee their safety after interrogation in San Francisco. (Sparks Minicam will not be much help to the PCs. He cares little for the Web or the Orion Foundation, and loves only his job. He will not reveal secrets of the trade or his effects.) If the PCs mention labor unions while questioning the prisoners, they will learn that the Union of Motion Picture Electrical Workers is not getting what it wants in contract negotiations, and is dangerously close to going on strike.

Bonnie wants the PCs to hurry, she expects the Web to attempt to kill Less today. She will allow them time to fake resumes, however. Once they are done at Suntastic, she will suggest that they head immediately for MegaGrand Studios, which is in Century City about 30 minutes west on Wilshire Boulevard.

Scene 5 — MegaGrand Studios

The PCs can drive up to MegaGrand Studios, which is on the Olympic Boulevard across from 20th Century Fox Studios. PCs must ask at the gate for the personnel office, which they do not need any authorization to visit. They are sure to catch a glimpse of a star or two, or at least someone who looks a lot like one. They will not see Reginald Less or Sandi Mandi.

As the PCs approach the personnel office, one of their cars will be rudely cut off by a long black limousine. The limousine goes the the office, stops 25 feet from the back door, and the chauffeur gets out and opens the car door, letting out six people. They are: a middle-aged man in overalls with a toolbox in his hands; a young man in a light gray business suit; a blond woman carrying a salon kit; a thin man in wire frame glasses; a woman dressed in corduroy and plaid and carrying a tool kit; and a hispanic woman in a fashionable sundress with a copy of *Vogue* magazine under her arm. These are the Web's replacements for the gaffer, the media assistant, the assistant to Sandi Mandi, the special effects assistant, the soundwoman, and the costumer. They are going inside to interview for the jobs, assuming they are the only ones who know about the vacancies. The fact that they all came together in a limousine should tip the PCs to this, but if more emphasis is needed, a sudden gust of wind may expose the holster the media assistant wears under his jacket.

All six agents have statistics 40, unless noted otherwise. All of them know about the Web, because all are professional hit men with no qualms about killing. They have been instructed to kill Reginald Less and cause as much damage to *Diamonds Kill For Never* as is necessary to shut down the filming.

Will Reghan, the gaffer, has level 0 Electronics skill and level 3 Demolitions skill. He is unarmed except for the explosives (wire and five ounces of plastique, plus a radio detonator) buried in his tool kit.

Hamilton Link, the media relations man, is a glib talker with the Presence (2) advantage. He has a .22 revolver under his jacket.

Sally Christensen, Ms. Mandi's assistant, is a level 3 Social Chameleon, and has level 4 Martial Arts skill with a REF of 60 and a DEX of 50.

Jon Hinton, the special effects man, has across-the-board level 1 skills in Electronics and Mechanics, including Radio Use. He is unarmed.

Terri Calon, the soundwoman, has level 3 Computer and Sleight of Hand skills, INT 50 and DEX 45, and the Ambidexterity (2) advantage. Her tool case contains a power drill, a stiletto, and a .22 beretta.

Polla Faran, the costumer, has the Attractive Appearance (1) advantage, is Bilingual in English and Portuguese, and has in her purse a number of poisons in cosmetics bottles, ranging from 2d20/1 to 1/20 in effect.

If these six are not incapacitated during this encounter, they will return to plague the set of *Diamonds Kill For Never* in any way they can. Also, the PCs should not let the Web agents precede them into the office. If the Web agents are able to interview first, they will get the jobs. The new personnel manager, Bethany Wheelwright, is so confused over the loss of the crew members that she will leap at the first people to walk in.

If the PCs stop the Web hit men from beating them to the personnel office, they can interview for jobs. Wheelwright suddenly became the new personnel manager when her superior left her a note saying that he quit without notice. He also left the resignation notices of seven other employees (all but Bugsy Berzerkly) on her desk. This is a crisis she has trouble dealing with. Wheelwright prefers a sedate life, without crisis. She will look for a quick solution to this problem, and will dive at any that appears. If the PCs are smart, they will be the first to present themselves as such. Each PC gets a separate interview. Wheelright will not ask many questions, wanting only a brief resume, a statement of qualification, and some references (which she will not follow up). The only critical question, which may or may not occur to her in her confusion, is whether the PCs applying for electrical jobs are union. The proper answer is "yes," and she will not demand proof. If the PCs can get past this easy hurdle, they will be asked to start work this afternoon. If they fail, haggle over wages, bicker, or otherwise frusrate Wheelwright, they will not get hired.

If the PCs are hired, they will have mobility on the set. If not, they will have to find some other way to get inside. There are always security guards around a major motion picture studio.

Scene Six — The set

Lot Twelve of MegaGrand Studios has been converted into a massive reconstruction of a concourse at Los Angeles International Airport (LAX). The Administrator should use the Airport Concourse and Airliner maps for the rest of this scenario, liberally embellishing them with cameras, lights, boom mikes, cue boards, sound boards, computer boards, and any other Hollywood machinery desired. The director's chair, where the great C.C. Beedemil sits, is beyond the customs declaration form tables. The actors' trailers are off the set behind the director's area. There are 300 people working on the set, and only seven of them are Web agents. The PCs must find and stop them all of the Web agents before Reginald Less is killed.

The most important person on the set, for the PCs' purposes at least, is Reginald Less. Less was an out-of-work commercials actor in England when John Connally, former star of the Stock films, finally lost all of his hair. A suave British star was needed to replace Connally, and Less got the break of a lifetime. Less is not an actor in the Olivier mold; rather, he is more like Bonzo the Chimpanzee. But he does have a winning smile which has gained him fame as the most hygienic of the Stocks. Less can use his Presence advantage only when he is smiling, but when he smiles he is almost irresistible. He demands the best and usually gets it; his suits are of the highest quality, as are his many stunt men. He cares little for nuances of script and character, and never does research before playing a character. Less is a fop, but he is a likable one, and would never wish anybody harm. He is often absent-minded, however, and frequently oversleeps or forgets his lines, costing MegaGrand megabucks. Nonetheless, the most important thing to Less is the credo that the show must go on, and he will not let anything prevent him from making the movie. In addition, Less is also the luckiest man alive. He has 11 Luck Points, and the Administrator should take pains to concoct the most improbable reasons for his escaping death. (This should never include the death of anyone else, however.) On the 12th successful assassination, the infamous Less luck will run out unless the PCs can prevent it. Less' statistics are 30, with no appreciable skills, but his Advantages include Incredible Luck (8), Wealth (3), Presence (2, as noted above), Sensuality (2), and Attractive Appearance (3). His Disadvantages are Deep Sleeper (2), Addiction (2, nicotine), Vision Impairment (2, contacts), Short-Winded (3), and Illiteracy (1, only as it applies to comprehension of content, not words). Note that he is not a coward.

Other important non-Web agents on the set include C.C. Beedemil, the director; Grizzly R. Asparagus, the producer; and Sandi Mandi, Less' latest leading lady.

C.C. Beedemil, the most famous director in Hollywood, is a reedy 74-year-old who retains his dictatorial manner (WIL 95) even in his golden years. Even after a shot where the entire population of Tokyo is destroyed in an epic volcanic eruption, he may call for a reshoot because an extra's wristwatch is on the wrong wrist. This irks studio executives, but they put up with it because his name guarantees an extra 10 or 12 million dollars at the box office. He will instantly fire anyone who argues with him or balks at his slightest whim.

Grizzly R. Asparagus, the supergenius who brought Ivan Lemming's John Stock to the silver screen, is also on hand as producer, making certain everything goes according to his vision for Stock (which, incidentally, is nothing like Lemming's). Asparagus is a portly man with an affable manner. He always looks out for cost overruns, and if he sees an employee not doing his job, he will fire the loafer immediately.

Sandi Mandi, Stock's love interest as Venus Aphrodite, is a mass of blond hair with little underneath. Like Less, she is incapable of good acting, but she looks good in a string bikini. When not on camera, Sandi is always engrossed in something pointless and uncomplex — blowing bubblegum or reading a supermarket tabloid. Her Advantages are Attractive Appearance (4) and Sensuality (2), but she is also completely Uncouth (3) and cares little about the feelings of others.

These three characters, and all other non-Web agents on the set, have statistics of 35 unless noted elsewhere.

The seven Web agents are average Hollywood workers except that they have agreed to report to and take orders from an unknown cartel who pays them extra money. Each has received a message this morning telling them to arrange an accident for Less or be killed themselves. None knows who the other six are. Each will make one attempt at killing Less, some halfheartedly, before giving up.

The seven (and their cover personalities) are: Del McNamara, a grouchy and pushy lighting supervisor; Frank Lapone, a timid, but efficient mikeman; Wilhelmina Berkowitz, a script girl who will flirt with the male PCs; Herb Coltrane, an animal handler who trains the customs canine brigade and acts shifty; Rusty Smith, an extra playing a guard at the baggage claim who is overly friendly; Spike Langford, a stuntman for Less who is hyperactive and can't stay in one place long; and Candi Brandi, an egghead understudy for Sandi Mandi.

These people, and their attempts on Less' life, are described below. If the six replacement agents met earlier were not incapacitated, they may be added to this list of potential assassins. Unlike these seven, the six hit men will not give up after one attempt. Each of the seven has statistics of 40. The seven should interact with the PCs based on the personalities sketched above.

The PCs must entrench themselves on the set and watch for signs of an impending assassination attempt. Meanwhile, they must do the jobs they were hired for or Grizzly R. Asparagus will fire them. The Administrator should give an example of what will happen if they do not do their jobs by having a surf bum extra misguidedly sing a Dead Kennedys song during a take. Asparagus, generally a happy sort, will pick up the surfer and hurl him out of the studio. The Administrator may also allow several crewmen to interact with the PCs, welcoming them to the set, showing them various equipment, etc. The Administrator should pay special attention to the fact all of the set's electrical workers are concerned about the walkout which could happen if contract talks break down. One or two might assume that unfamiliar workers are scabs, and the PCs had better be able to fake union membership if they wish to avoid an ugly scene.

The Shoot

The scene which is to be shot today is John Stock's epic battle in the airport. The scene could not be filmed on location at LAX because C.C. Beedemil plans to blow up a good section of the airport in the process. The action goes as follows:

Stock pilots a jumbo jet to the terminal, winning applause from the 465 passengers he just saved by landing safely despite the fact that the wings

were destroyed by terrorists. When he steps off the plane with two stewardesses in tow, a rude shock confronts him — all the people in the airport want to kill him. He ditches the stewardesses and runs through the terminal to the snack bar (lower left on the Airport map). As he runs past the snack bar, attendants hurl poison-tipped pretzels at him, but he throws a small explosive at a bank of departure monitors above his opponents, stunning them. Stock hangs a hard right and leaps through a metal detector, and the electronic scream sets off his radio controlled bomb, which kills all of the bad guys in the terminal and snack bar. He rounds the corner to Customs, where inspection agents fire at him from the declaration tables, but he grabs a carbon dioxide fire extinguisher and hoses them all down. Then five drug-busting canines from customs leap on him, but he throws a robot cat into the air and all the dogs chase it. Stock runs through the waiting area to baggage claim, dodging bullets and grenades. He leaps onto the baggage carrousel and hurls luggage at his attackers, even knocking out the baggage handlers who come running up the baggage chute to get him. A moment later, he is through the doors to the currency exchange, where an oriental martial arts expert attempts to kill him with shuriken made out of Japanese currency. But Stock evens the exchange rate by knocking him out with a bag of British sterling. Stock finally dashes to the car rental agencies, where he charms a homicidal checker (Sandi Mandi) into renting him a Lincoln Continental. Clasping her hand, he runs through the out doors at the bottom of the map, commandeers an airport bus, and drives away. Shooting this scene will take approximately 10 hours, because Beedemil will halt for reshoots.

Less arrives for the shoot 20 minutes late, prompting Beedemil to shout to the crew, "Where the devil is Less? Is he dead or something?" After the PCs fret for a moment, a voice will ring out from behind the set, "No need for obituaries yet, C.C.!" A dazzling smile precedes Less onto the set, where dozens of cosmeticians and wardrobers bustle around him. After they are done with him, shooting may begin. (Film shooting, at least.) Before shooting each section of the scene, Beedemil will give a quick rundown of the action: "Okay, Reggie-Baby, in this scene you jump on top of the baggage carrousel and throw the luggage at the assassins. I want emotion, Reggie-Baby, passion. Emote for me, babe!"

Assassination Attempts

During production, seven assassination attempts occur, more if the six replacement agents make it to the set. It is the Administrator's duty to involve the PCs in all of them.

1. As the wingless jet taxies to the gate, Del McNamara, the lighting engineer, will take over an outside lighting rig that the PC gaffer may be working on. McNamara deliberately aims a powerful spotlight at the cockpit. Less, who is at the controls of the plane, is momentarily blinded and opens the throttle, sending the plane speeding across the set subject only to Less' inability to find the brakes. It zips in and out of the set, shaking up all the technicians and cameramen inside the plane. Unless the PCs do something to stop the plane, it will crash into the mockup of the gate, expelling Less and two stewardess extras through the two windshields and into the terminal. All three will be unscathed, and Beedemil will shout, "Cut! It's a wrap! Brilliant work, Reggie-Baby!" McNamara will be far away from the lighting rig when the plane crashes.

2. At the snack bar, Frank Lapone, the stoic mikeman, has a simple accident planned. He has rigged a boom mike to fall into the monitors, bringing them crashing down on Less. To do this, Lapone will have to manually bring the mike in low, so it might be in the view of a camera. Unless halted, Lapone will unscrew the beam on the mike, causing it to hit the monitors and break their hanging supports. Luckily, Less will jump behind a potted rubber tree which will deflect the monitors.

3. Before the shot at the metal detector, Wilhelmina Berkowitz, the script girl, will rush up to Less and say, "Here's that script you wanted." Although momentarily baffled, Less will politely kiss the girl's hand and in so doing will not notice her dropping a real miniature bomb into his jacket pocket. When Less leaps through the detector (with the aid of a hidden trampoline), the detector shrieks. Less's jacket snags on the detector frame, tearing away the pocket as the special effects explosion levels the terminal mockup. As the crew applauds the explosion, Beedemil will shout, "Cut! Do it again! That stupid detector is still screaming!" It is doing so because half of Less's jacket is still stuck on the frame. Less says, "Oh, it's just my jacket, C.C. I'll get it." As he nears it, the bomb explodes, apparently catching Less in the destruction. However, he leaps into the nonfunctional carry-on luggage X-ray machine, shielding himself from the blast. This will not be apparent for several seconds. C.C. will insist that filming continue despite the "technical malfunction" of the jacket.

4. Herb Coltrane, the soft-spoken animal trainer, will lace his five doberman pinschers' food with amphetamines, calculated to drive the tamed animals crazy during the attack scene. Less and the rest of the crew expect the animals to playfully tussle with Less during the scene. Less presciently jokes to Coltrane before the shot, "Boy, those bowsers sure look vicious, wot? Wouldn't want them to take a nip out of me, that's the truth." When the director shouts "Action!" Coltrane will loose the maddened dogs. They will seem to leap upon Less and overwhelm him. Their statistics are CON 35; MOV 140; COM 55; DAM 1d6 and quadruple fatigue resistance due to the amphetamines. Despite their ferociousness, Less' luck will again save him. He accidentally smashes the cat robot against the wall, causing it to emit an ultrasonic scream which disorients the dogs completely. Less is unruffled, but needs a new tuxedo from wardrobe. Coltrane hesitantly collects his stunned dogs to lock them up while they shake off the drugs.

5. At the baggage claim, Rusty Smith is dressed as a security guard with a big gun (.357 Magnum) in his holster. The gun and the six bullets inside are not props. When Less does the baggage carrosel scene, Smith intends to shoot him. Smith, a paunchy man in his mid-40s with Basic Firearms (0/18%) skill, is unstable and the only one of the seven Web agents who is philosophically capable of killing. When he does so, however, Less will be defending himself with sturdy luggage, which bullets cannot pierce. Less will miraculously deflect the bullets until either the PCs or the real security guards stop Smith and cart him away. Smith will not surrender, but if he is captured, he will shout warnings protesting the takeover of the world by

a "Coalition of midgets and Iranians." Asparagus will suggest that production be halted for the day, but Beedemil will protest: "Some lousy loony with a rod doesn't run this show! I do!" Less concurs, although he says Beedemil is being a little rough on Rusty Smith, who obviously had a bad childhood.

6. In the currency combat scene, Less is expected to let his stuntman, Spike Langford, take over. Langford, an American made up to look exactly like Less, has a brief conversation with Less before the shooting. During this conversation, it is impossible to tell them apart. Langford tells Less the shot is a snap, and that even Less could perform this choreographed combat without a stuntman. Less, who loves adventure, agrees to a keen charade — he will play Langford playing Less in this scene. Observers will see one of the two Stocks step away from the other and shout in a reasonably authentic Los Angeles accent, "Stuntman ready!" He then he walks out in front of a ninja-clad exchange agent and says, "Love those duds, wot?" This should tip off careful observers that it is really Less on the stage. Less does not have Langford's shuriken-proof mesh shirt under his tuxedo, so he will be at a decided disadvantage against the ninja, whose sharpened yen can be lethal (treat as stilettos). The ninja actor has Oriental Martial Arts at level 4, but thinks his opponent is protected against the shuriken and can defend himself. Thus, when the director calls for action, the ninja will leap out of the exchange booth, flash his shuriken, and prepare to hurl them at Less. If the combat is not stopped, Less trips and falls as the shuriken whiz past him, chopping deep grooves in the wall. Less bumbles and dodges the ninja's potentially lethal blows and leads him on a merry chase around the set, wrecking dozens of props along the way. The Administrator should make certain that the PCs believe Less is in great danger as the ninja's blows destroy tables and brick walls. The combat eventually destroys one of the movie cameras, and Beedemil calls, "Cut! Edit out the camera! And get Reggie-Baby back into the scene so we can wrap this thing!" Less gasps, "The rap's on you, C.C. old boy! It's me, Reginald!" Asparagus chews him out for risking his extremely valuable life, but nothing will dampen Less' good cheer. Langford will try to be gone by this point.

7. The final portion of the shoot involves Less charming Sandi Mandi's car rental clerk character and hijacking an airport bus to safety. Realizing that Less is not dead yet, Candi Brandi, the understudy, spikes Sandi's lemonade with a mickey. As the director calls for her to come to the set, Sandi staggers forward, her eyes and lips playing tricks on her. Beedemil says, "Aw no, Sandi-Baby, are you plastered again? We got a scene to shoot, babe!" Sandi responds with something completely unintelligible. Beedemil tells her assistants to walk her back to her trailer and demands to know where her understudy is. Candi Brandi, who looks exactly like Sandi, sheepishly steps forward, and Beedemil kisses her on the forehead for saving his movie. He explains the shot to her and tells her to take her place behind the rental booth. The scene begins with Less running up to the booth, flashing his winning smile, and instantly entrancing Brandi into renting Stock a Lincoln Continental. They run arm-in-arm out the doors to a waiting airport bus which Stock commandeers. However, once inside the bus, Brandi gives a mickey to Less, knocking him unconscious. Brandi, who has level 1 skill in Bus Driving from a former day job, drives the bus off the set and onto Olympic Boulevard. The people on the set of *Diamonds Kill For Never* congratulate themselves on finishing the last shot of the day, not realizing that Less has been kidnapped. But Brandi, who cannot bring herself to kill, simply drives the bus as far as she can while she thinks of something to do. She is terrified of being captured and facing a jail term for kidnapping. The PCs must stop the climactic kidnapping, although to make it interesting there should be no warning of Brandi's intentions. The Administrator may bring in any remaining bad guys to spice up this scene, such as the six who tried to get the jobs as replacements (unless the PCs already have dealt with them). Brandi does not want to get shot, but she is cool under pressure and will not panic at a simple roadblock or tire blowout. She certainly will surrender to Orion Foundation agents if they save her from being arrested.

When the PCs save Reginald Less and stop all further attempts on his life, they have successfully completed their mission. Less' reaction to the PCs will have to be determined by the Administrator, but they are almost guaranteed to receive a brilliant smile. ❑

The Living City

Skully's Bar And Bait

by Halina Adamski

"The Living City" is a continuing feature in POLYHEDRON™ Newszine *through which members can share their best fantasy city material with the rest of the Network. All acceptable submissions will eventually become part of TSR, Inc.'s series of* LIVING CITY *fantasy play aids. If you have a building, business, encounter, or personality that adds some spice to your campaign's "town business," we'd like to see it.*

This dockside tavern/live bait shop is very popular among the brawling sailors, fishermen, thieves, and adventurers of Raven's Bluff.

The shop is a remarkable structure of stone and wood tacked onto (and held up by) two stronger buildings, one alongside and one to the rear. The roof is crumbling and oft-patched tile.

The front room of Skully's is — thankfully — open to the air, which provides some relief from the noxious odors of the place. During inclement weather a tarp can be rolled down from the roof. On the rare occasions when Skully's is closed, a folding steel grate may be rolled down as well. The common room is filled with a collection of crude benches and tables. An L-shaped bar about two feet wide protects the entrances to the storage room and Skully's office.

Skully's does a lively business, both from the bar and from the bait barrels which stand in the front "corner." The tavern is no place for those without iron stomachs. Anyone with a Constitution of less than 12 must make a successful Constitution check when attempting to have a drink or he will become nauseated by the stench of fish and blood. Nauseated characters fight at −4 on all attack rolls and Dexterity-related rolls (AC bonus for high Dexterity is temporarily negated, etc.) for 1d6 rounds. Unless extremely dangerous looking, nauseous PCs will likely become a source of amusement for the regulars.

Skully stocks almost every kind of bait from fish entrails, which he sells for 1 cp/bucket to large frogs and giant centipedes which go for 3 gp each (he will buy these more exotic items, live,

from adventurers for 1 gp). If someone is unable to provide a bait container, Skully will rent him a bucket for 1 cp plus a 1 cp deposit.

Beer, ale, rum, brandy, and wine are sold for half the usual prices. These are adequate in quality, though obviously not the best. A keg of fine brandy (5 gp/jack) and 5-8 bottles of superior wine (4 gp/jack, 12 gp bottle) are kept in the storeroom for the occasional wealthy adventurer or slumming noble.

The storeroom is crammed full of tanks, cages, and barrels of spirits, fish guts (which Skully buys fresh each day), worms, insects, frogs, rats, squid, etc. Each is labeled with a strange runic code (see below). A small swinging door in the storeroom wall allows access for Grimalkin the cat, which chases uncaged rats.

Skully's office is barren except for a desk, a door which opens out on a narrow alley, and a cot which Skully uses when he's too tired to go home. (He lives in the thieves quarter, though no *living* person other than Mab knows where.)

The desk contains a locked cashbox, which holds cash, never more than 200 gp in copper and silver coins, and papers covered in strange runic figures. Skully makes a daily deposit with a local money lender so that there is never an excess of money here. He does this at different times each day, so as not to become a target for thieves. The "runes" match the marks on the barrels in the storeroom. This is Skully's inventory list in a code he devised since he cannot read and write.

A secret door behind the cot is opened by a lever on the underside of the desk. (Treat attempts to find this as a concealed door.) Behind the secret door is a small room containing another door and a trap door in the floor. The door (which is a secret door from the other side) opens into the next building, and may be used as an escape route. Beneath the trap door there appears to be nothing but water and pilings, but Skully keeps an *invisible* rowboat tied there. In addition, this room contains another secret door which opens into the "treasure room." A battered wooden shield leans against the wall near the treasure room door. The shield is pitted and melted as though by acid. Skully uses the shield to protect himself from the green slime in the next room.

The treasure room appears empty save for a large locked chest; the lock is trapped with a poison needle — sleep 1d10 hours. The chest is full of gold coins and gems. Although the treasure appears to be worth thousands, the gold coins are gilded copper and the gems are glass, with a total worth of about 100 gp.

An *invisible* green slime lurks above the final secret door, this door leads into the storage room for special "bait." Skully sometimes buys items such as assassin bug eggs, throat leeches, or bookworms. He pays high prices but demands absolute secrecy. PCs who talk will find the full weight of the Thug's Guild on them. Skully sells these monsters to the Thug's Guild *only* (no exceptions), and in turn they protect his store from robbery.

The contents of this area must be determined by the DM, but it should be remembered that the items kept here are rare and that Skully rids himself of such things as quickly as possible, so it is likely that adventurers will find naught but an empty stone-walled room.

Skully

8th Level Human Male Fighter

STR: 18
INT: 13
WIS: 14
DEX: 15
CON: 17
CHA: 9
COM: 7
AC Normal: 10
Hit Points: 74
Alignment: Chaotic Neutral
Weapon Proficiencies: Bastard Sword, Dagger, Battle Axe, Club, Crossbow
Special Abilities: Boating, Navigation, Swimming
Languages: Common, Thieves Cant

Skully is 47 years old. He is muscular, weighs 210 pounds, and stands 6'3" high. His bald pate is polished to a high shine, and he wears a long, drooping black mustache. A tattoo of crossed scimitars covers each of his massive biceps, and he wears a dangling lady's earring of sarbossa (see *Gems Galore*, DRAGON® Magazine #72) and silver (value 35 gp). His hands bear several ugly scars which are the result of giant centipede bites. (He will point these out to centipede purchasers and warn them to take care.)

No one in Raven's Bluff knows Skully's true origins. He is rumored to have been a mercenary, a famed assassin, a pirate, a prince of Calimsham, and many other things. Skully fosters these rumors, some true some not.

Actually, he was the son of a goatherd on the rocky coast of Damara. At age 12 he ran away, becoming the linkboy for a band of adventurers. Some years later he joined the Men of the Red Blade, a mercenary company. He fell in love with a warrior woman, Tharn, who was slain in the battle of High Moon, one of the many skirmishes between Vaasa and Damara. It is her earring that he wears.

After Tharn's death, Skully left the Red Blade and joined up with Alterai, pirate captain of the *Flying Scimitar.* The tattoos on Skully's arms were once scimitars with wings.

About 10 years ago, when Alterai was finally captured and hung, Skully joined Teldar of the *Kissing Maiden* (see Pirate Isles of the Inner Sea in the *Cyclopedia of the Realms*), however after several fierce arguments with Teldar, he had a second scimitar tattooed over the wings, shaved his head — hence his nickname — so he wouldn't be recognized, and bought the dockside shack which he turned into a thriving business.

Though few know it, Skully — who's original name was Janthag Blackpelt — is one of the richest men on the docks, and he intends to stay that way. He is suspicious and cunning, although he is careful not to let this show in his cheerful, rowdy exterior. Having survived many close calls, including a near hanging at Alterai's side, Skully is careful to always have at least two escape routes at ready. He disdains armor, but will not be found without a weapon and shield in easy reach.

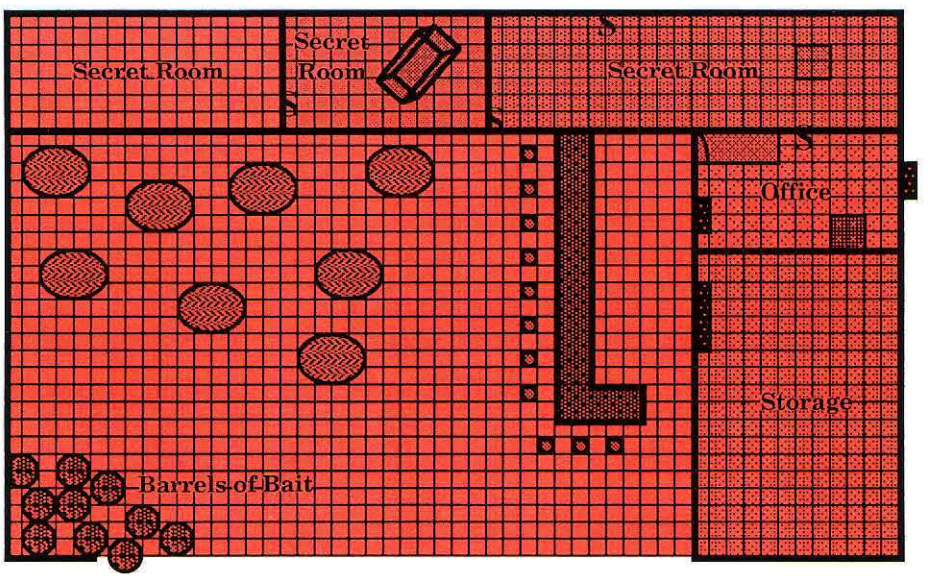
Skully was taught the Thieves Cant by Mab, his friend and sometimes lover, and the only one who knows his true name.

Mab Hardbutter

6th Level Human Female Thief

STR: 15
INT: 16
WIS: 12
DEX: 17
CON: 10
CHA: 12
COM: 13
AC Normal: 10
Hit Points: 29
Alignment: Lawful Neutral
Weapon Proficiencies: Dagger, Garrot, Short Sword
Special Abilities: Blind Fighting
Languages: Common, Thieves Cant

Skully's Bar And Bait



Thief Skills:

PP	OL	FT	MS	HS	HN	CW	RL
60	57	45	52	42	20	92	30

Mab is a blousy woman of about 42 years. She is 5'11" tall and weighs 140 pounds. Although her hard years as a dockside doxy have stripped away much of her looks, it is not hard to tell that she was once very pretty. She wears her graying brown hair girlishly long and sports a deep tan as well as most of her own teeth.

One of six daughters of an inland dairy farmer, Mab ran away at an early age and came to Ravens Bluff. She was quickly befriended by a sly thief who got Mab to keep his victims busy while he robbed them. She later graduated to the house of a wealthy procuress, but was too light-fingered to last long there. She took to frequenting the dockside taverns, picking the pockets of those who were paying more attention to her face than to their purses.

Mab was fighting a losing battle with an unhappy victim when Skully stepped in and to the rescue. They have been friends ever since. Mab often tends bar at Skully's and frequents the tavern on much of her off time.

Kindly and loud-spoken, Mab still retains her country accent. She is absolutely loyal to Skully. She has refused several "requests" by the Thieves' Guild to spy on him.

Erny the Mop

Male Dwarf Fighter/Thief, (2/2)

STR: 15
INT: 11
WIS: 10
DEX: 12 (4 see below)
CON: 13
CHA: 5
COM: 5
AC Normal: 8
Hit Points: 20
Alignment: Neutral Evil
Weapon Proficiencies (fighter): Mop (treat as Staff), Short Sword, Hammer, Whip
Weapon Proficiencies (thief): Dagger, Garrot
Special Abilities: Charioteering, Rope Use
Languages: Common, Dwarven, Kobold, Gnome, Goblin, Orcish

Thief Skills:

PP	OL	FT	MS	HS	HN	CW
40	39	40	1	15	10	0

Erny "the Mop" weighs 170 pounds and stands 4' 8" high, rather tall for a dwarf. His hair and full beard are a graying blond, and his eyes are watered-down blue. He is grumpy and loves to complain, finding fault in everything. He talks incessantly, contradicting himself often, seemingly just for the pleasure of hearing his own stuttering voice. When trying to remember some fact during a diatribe, he rolls his eyes back into his head so that only the whites show, as though he were looking for the answer on the inside of his skull. This can be quite unsettling for those not accustomed to it.

Erny ruined his knees in a chariot accident several decades ago. The Dexterity score in brackets above represents his Dexterity for walking and dodging; the higher number is his hand Dexterity. Erny's movement is only 3"; and he has an extremely low chance to move silently (due both to clumsiness and pained groans) and cannot climb walls.

Erny was born in Ravens Bluff. As a young dwarf he ran with a bunch of thugs and was soon recruited into the Thug's Guild. As a front, as well as a way to hear rumors, he worked as the cleaning man for several dockside gin mills. Since his accident he has been forced to confine himself to the spying end of the business. In the past several years he has been assigned exclusively to watch Skully and one or two other tavern owners, due to the fact that he moves too slowly to clean — if it can be called that — a great number of places. He also tends bar at Skully's when neither Skully nor Mab are about.

Erny plays his role of cantankerous old dwarf to perfection. As that great rarity — a lazy dwarf — he uses his handicap to the utmost. Erny is loyal only to the guild, and any secrets which he hears will be passed on to his contact (a human "fisherman") as soon as possible. ❑

The Living City

Embrol Sludge's Eatery and Shell Shoppe

by Randall W. Lemon

This restaurant and jewelry shop is located in a poor section of the Ravens Bluff waterfront, but not the worst section. The restaurant serves seafood exclusively, and though most patrons come back again — because the food is good and the prices are low — it never has done the business it should, perhaps because of its unappetizing name. People who do enter the eatery seeking a meal are often amazed because it is kept as clean as any waterfront eating place ever could be expected.

Embrol and his three sons and one daughter are primarily responsible for catching the seafood that fills the cafe's bill of fare, though no more than three of them ever are away fishing at once. Sometimes, the Sludges will purchase fish from another fisherman, either to augment a particularly poor catch or to pick up seafood for specialty orders.

Embrol Sludge

5th Level Human Fighter

STR: 16
INT: 14
WIS: 17
DEX: 10
CON: 16
CHR: 11
COM: 9
AC Normal: 10
Hit Points: 38
Alignment: Neutral Good
Weapon Proficiencies: Long Sword, Dagger, Spear, Crossbow, Trident
Special Abilities: Boating, Swimming, Fishing, Jeweler
Languages: Common

Embrol is 57 years old, and is 5′ 11″ tall. Many years ago, when he was a landlubber adventurer, he became fascinated by the precious and semi-precious shells his party occasionally found. He made it his business to claim the shells and pearls from any treasure.

Though no one in town is aware of it, his first wife was an aquatic elf. He rescued her from an underwater grotto where she was being held prisoner by some locathah. They fell in love and decided to marry. About a year later, Radea was born, but Antillia, Embrol's wife, was killed by a sahuagin while returning to her people for a visit.

Needing a wife to be Radea's mother, Embrol moved to Ravens Bluff and searched. He found Alhambra Zydel. Physically, Alhambra was exceedingly homely, but on the inside she was a great beauty, full of every matronly virtue. Though no real passion ever existed between Alhambra and Embrol, they did have a great deal of love and affection for each other. Alhambra was an excellent wife to Embrol and a good mother to Radea. And because she wanted more children to share her love, the couple had three, all boys: Quarak, Endicott, and Dirk. The three boys are not adventurers.

Quarak is 20 years old and is a capable fisherman and an excellent jeweler. He specializes in necklaces, pendants, and bracelets made from the shells and pearls his family obtains. Currently, his puka shell necklaces are something of a fad, and many of his more expensive compositions are popular with the city's upper middle class.

Endicott is 18 years old and a consummate fisherman. He seems to have a sixth sense when it comes to finding the largest schools of fish, and he seldom comes home empty handed. After the day's fishing, Endicott usually can be found swapping fish stories and singing sea shanties at a waterfront tavern.

Dirk is 15 years old. He likes gaudy clothes, practical jokes, and the ladies. He pretends to resent his older sister's mothering, but he loves her dearly and will lose his temper if anyone threatens or insults her.

Alhambra died two years ago, in a plague that swept the waterfront. Her passing saddened all who knew her.

Alhambra set high standards both in the home and in the Eatery. She was an excellent and organized chef with a good deal of imagination and flair, and it is because of her culinary skills that the restaurant has done so well. She was also quite fastidious about her residence and business, and the Eatery's cleanliness and prosperity are her legacy.

Radea

0 Level Female half elf (aquatic)

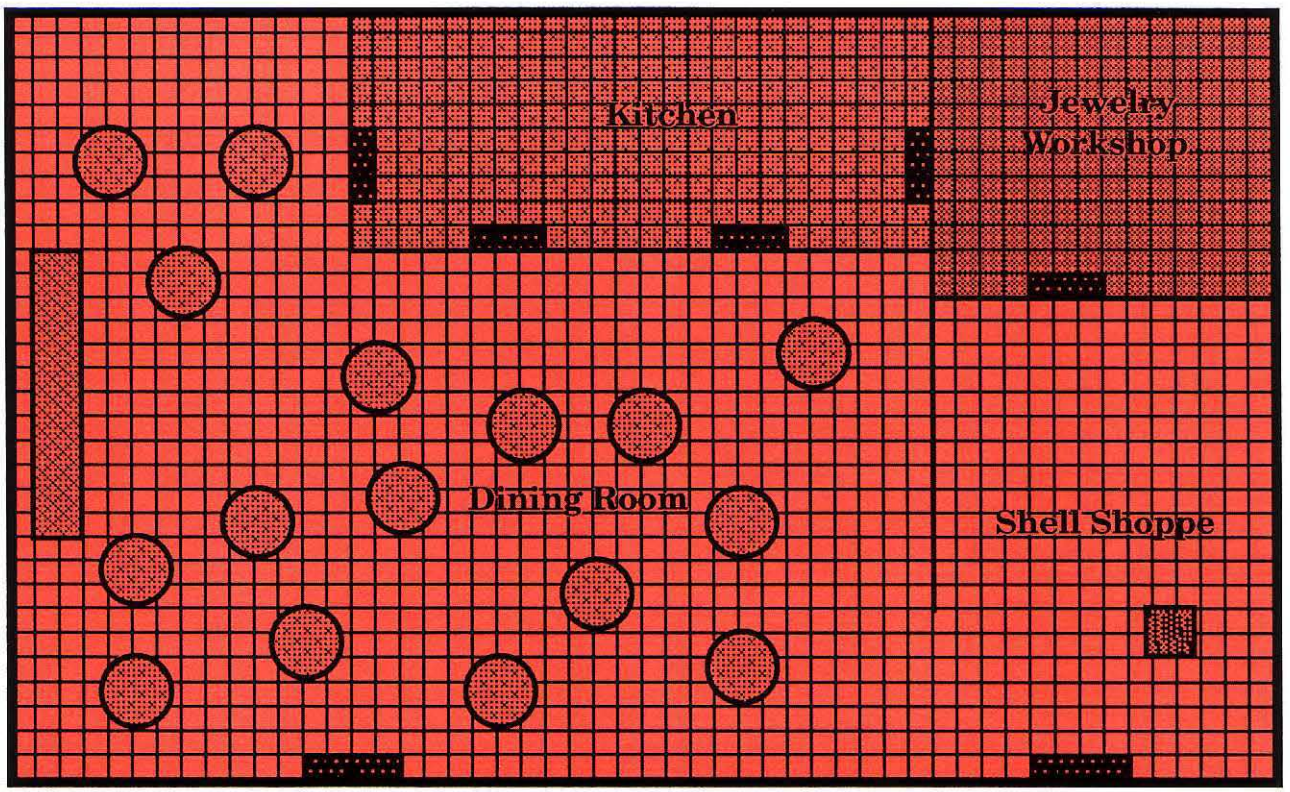
STR: 10
INT: 11
WIS: 14
DEX: 16
CON: 16
CHR: 10
COM: 16
AC Normal: 8
Hit Points: 3
Alignment: Neutral Good
Weapon Proficiencies: Knife
Special Abilities: Swimming, Cooking
Languages: Common

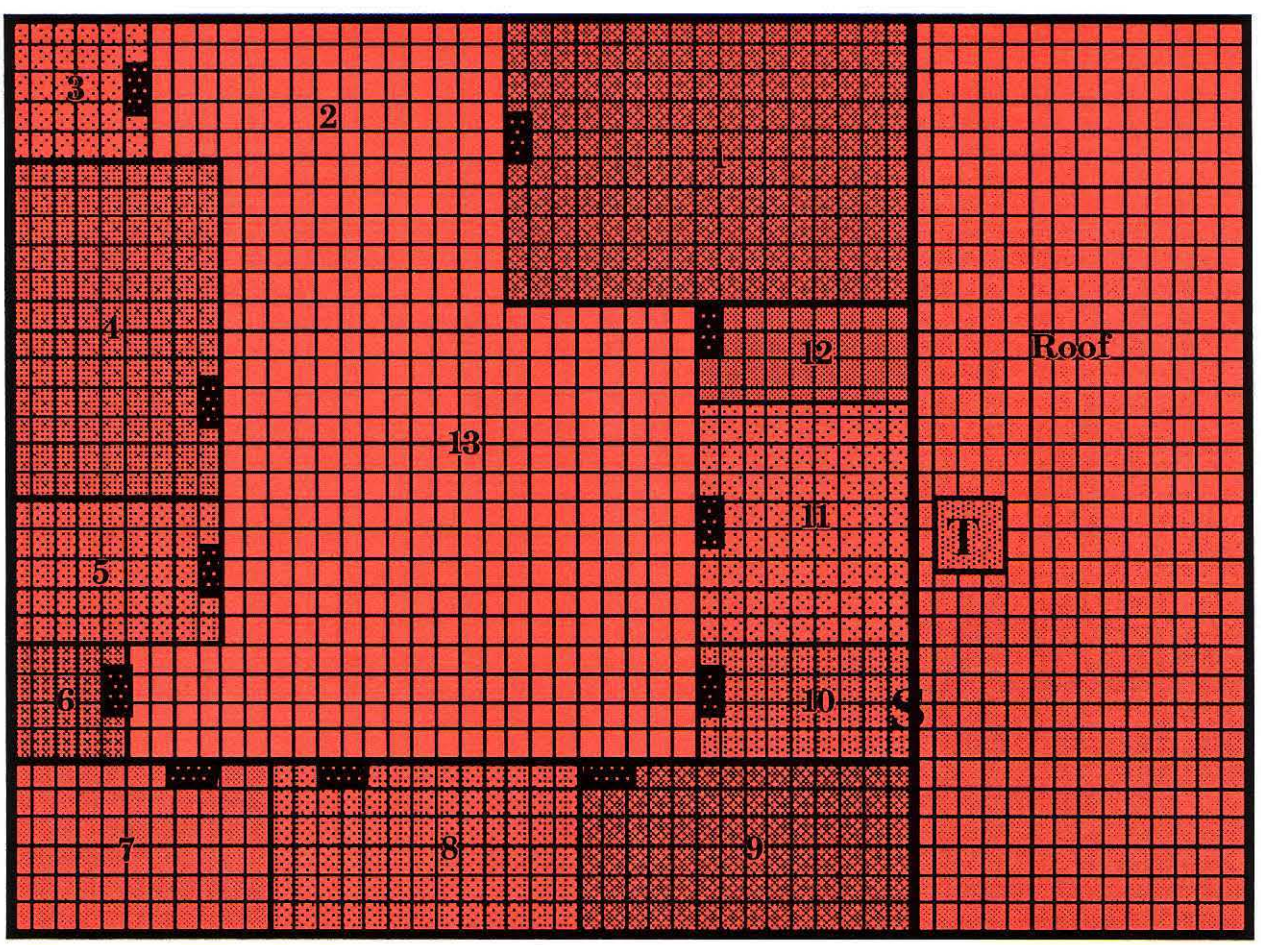
Radea is 24 years old. She is 5′ 5″ tall and weighs 108 pounds. Radea is Embrol's daughter by his first wife, the aquatic elf maiden Antillia. No one in town is aware of her origin, but most do agree that she looks exotic. She looks almost entirely human except for a slight greenish-silver tinge to her skin that is noticeable only when the sun strikes her just right. She also has birthmarks on her neck that may be vestigial gills. Her hair varies from a sandy blond to slightly washed-out blond, depending on the season and the amount of sun she gets.

She is an excellent pearl diver and a strong swimmer, being able to hold her breath for three minutes. When she is not working at the Eatery she will almost always be found in the water, usually to meet her lover. Two months ago, while diving, she was caught in some seaweed and might have drowned but for the aid of a young merman. Only Dirk, who was with her that day, is aware of the meetings between the two of them, and Radea has sworn Dirk to silence. Since that day, Radea and Tjhal Rajhmathen, the merman, have pledged their love and vowed to marry. Tjhal recently gave Radea a betrothal gift to make their life together easier (see Radea's room description).

Since Alhambra's death, Radea has unconsciously begun to mother the boys, especially Dirk. Radea also has proven an adequate replacement for her step-mother in the kitchen, though she lacks Alhambra's zest for cooking and house chores. Alhambra made sure that Radea memorized the recipes to all her

Embrol Sludge's Eatery And Shell Shoppe





☐ =two feet

very best seafood concoctions. Between Radea and the other three cooks; Tarlie, Andrea, and Feldra (all level 0 humans, hp 3 each), the high standards that Alhambra set in the kitchen have been maintained.

Buddy

1st Level Human Fighter

STR: 18/58
INT: 10
WIS: 8
DEX: 11
CON: 16
CHR: 13
COM: 7
AC Normal: 10
Hit Points: 10
Alignment: Neutral Good
Weapon Proficiencies: Long Sword, Dagger, Battle Axe, Club
Special Abilities: Swimming
Languages: Common

Buddy is 18 years old. He is 6′ 8″ tall and weighs 285 pounds. He is the son of a former adventuring companion of Embrol's named Matua. Matua was a powerful fighter and brilliant strategist, and he usually served as party leader. Matua kept adventuring for about four years after Embrol quit, but decided to retire after a particularly dismal season in which he lost his armor, his best sword, his treasure, many of his best comrades, and his sword arm as well.

Broke and in desperate need of a job, he showed up in Ravens Bluff. He soon ran into his old adventuring pal, Embrol. Embrol brought Matua home where Alhambra nursed him back to health. In the meantime, Embrol helped Matua regain some of his lost self respect. At first, Matua helped behind the bar in the Eatery, only meaning to stay long enough to gain a grub stake so he could go back to adventuring, but that was before he met Emwa Carellan. Emwa was the first person Embrol officially hired. She was young and impressionable and meant to help in the kitchen and serving tables. As it turned out, she spent more time in the Eatery than in the kitchen. Often while she was clearing tables she would listen to Matua tell tales of his adventuring days. Matua, although twice Emwa's age and minus an arm, was still a fine cut of a man, and Emwa soon found herself falling madly in love with him. Between Emwa's love, Embrol's selfless friendship, and the security of a steady job, Matua was happier than he ever had been before. Soon all thoughts of further adventuring slipped away. He married Emwa and bought a place not far from the Eatery. Emwa continued working until she became pregnant a few years later with Buddy. Emwa, unfortunately, died in childbirth. And Buddy practically grew up as a Sludge, usually being cared for by Alhambra while Matua tended bar.

Buddy inherited all his father's vast strength, but very little of his intelligence. Buddy is enormous, but quite gullible. Many of the other children of Ravens Bluff often played tricks on him because he was so easy to fool. And it fell to Radea and Quarak to keep him out of serious trouble. Buddy's sense of humor and openness kept him from holding grudges very long, and soon the other children stopped playing tricks on the gentle giant; not because they feared him, but because he had become their cherished friend.

However, Buddy has never forgotten how Radea looked out for him and has become increasingly infatuated with her. He often daydreams about marrying her, but he has never said a word to her about it. He would be hurt if he found out about her relationship with Tjhal Rajhmathen, the merman. Matua, too, perished with the plague, and since that time Buddy has served as a bodyguard/bouncer for the Eatery and Shell Shoppe.

Buddy eats all his meals at the table closest to the Shell Shoppe's entrance, but usually spends more time staring at Radea than he does watching the customers to make sure they don't pocket anything

The Business

Employees

Besides the family, Buddy, and the cooks, Embrol employs two bartenders, Torel Bander and Jonah Hagoos, and three serving wenches.

Torel Bander, the day bartender, is affable, dependable, and honest. (He is a zero level human, hp 4).

Jonah Hagoos, the night bartender, is a neutral evil human fighter (STR 16; AC 6, hp 23). Jonah worries Embrol. He is experienced, having worked in a number of other bars. He is usually competent and helpful, but on three occasions he has flown into fits of uncontrollable rage. Once, he beat a serving girl who spilled a drink on him, another time he broke an empty cask over the bar when Dirk pulled a prank on him. Most recently, Jonah knocked out an abusive customer who insulted him. The customer left the Eatery vowing vengeance on Jonah and his employer. Finally, Embrol has just learned that the last inn Jonah worked at burned to the ground just six hours after an argument between Jonah and the innkeeper. Embrol really doesn't have the heart to fire Jonah, but has decided to lay down the law if he loses his temper again.

One wench works mainly days, the other two work nights. Of course, their hours are subject to change due to illness or special occurrences.

Quarak also employs a boy who helps him in the jewelry shop.

Once in a while Embrol takes a turn in the kitchen making his specialty for a new patron who catches his fancy or for an old one who has a taste for it. His specialty is a very spicy fish stew, hearty with potatoes, leeks, white fish, red peppers, cayenne, wine, saffron, garlic, bread, olive oil, laurel, fruit peels, and whatever else strikes his fancy. It is not for the timid eater.

Embrol usually acts as host, moving around where he is most needed. He tries to greet each customer at the door personally. He occasionally takes a turn behind the bar pouring wine or ale. The bar is quite small and has no stools in it. That is because it is there only to serve customers who want spirits with their food. The selection is quite limited. Other beverages include (expensive) mineral water, milk, herbal teas, and a fairly strong, hot chickory-flavored beverage called "efoc."

History

When Embrol first purchased the building that houses the Eatery, he spent most of his cash. He quickly spent the rest on seafood and on the shells and pearls he felt compelled to purchase.

Originally, only Embrol and Alhambra ran the place. She cooked, cleaned, and watched the kids, and Embrol did everything else. The property was at first quite a simple affair. The main building had two floors. Embrol and Alhambra lived on the top one and raised their children there. The bottom floor had a kitchen at the back, a bar on one side, and tables everywhere else.

There was also a small lean-to alongside the main building that had been used for some kind of storage by its original owner. When Embrol moved in, he discovered a hidden cellar beneath

the lean-to. When he pulled it open, he thought he heard a noise. When he went to check his stores of potatoes, tubers, and leeks, he discovered them awash in seawater. Apparently the former owner of the property had dug a tunnel from the nearby sea to his cellar for smuggling goods past the harbormaster.

Embrol was out some vegetables and was much too honest to want secret access to the sea, so he was determined to seal up the tunnel. Unfortunately, Embrol was a much better adventurer than a mason, and his attempts to block the passage slowed the incoming seawater to a trickle, but did not keep it out. Worst of all, the standing seawater smelled terrible, like the bilge of a ship.

Then an idea dawned on him. Though most of the ready cash he had accumulated during his adventuring days was tied up in his property, he still had a number of valuable items and a couple of gems that he held onto "for a rainy day," as well as the pearls and shells he was purchasing. These items included a *ring of water breathing* and a *ring of free action* that had helped he and Antillia to live happily together. He also had a *trident of fish command,* a pouch with five platinum pieces, a *long sword +1, dagger +2/+3 vs. creatures larger than man-sized,* a white pearl worth 200 gp, a black pearl worth 1,500 gp, and a small pouch of semi-precious shells worth 325 gp. Thieves and thieving parties had been a common enough sight in his adventuring days. Seldom, however, did he run into adventurers who could handle underwater adventures. He was determined to allow the pit to fill with the vile, smelly water, which luckily left only the slightest odor in the lean-to above, and put his horde in a watertight chest at its bottom. Only he would know it was there, and even if the pit were discovered, the water would keep his chest from being seen.

Embrol rigged a system where one lever let water pour in and another lever allowed the water to be pumped out. He had found what he hoped would be the perfect hiding place for his treasure. This worked well for him, and he continued to add sacks to the chest: 100 cp, 25 sp, 15 gp, 2 pp, and three pearls worth 50 gp each. On his deathbed, Matua left his only remaining treasure to Embrol's safekeeping, to be given to Buddy when Embrol saw fit — his *cube of force.* The cube lies in a small red sack inside the chest.

Embrol started operating his Shell Shoppe from the bar, but his return business at the Eatery increased practically every time a new customer tried Alhambra's cooking. Finally, he was forced to knock out the wall between the lean-to and the Eatery and connect the two. He added counters and cabinets so the small area could serve as the Eatery and Shell Shoppe.

When the lean-to was finally torn down, the only inconvenience was that now the only time Embrol could get to his possessions was when the whole place was closed. An unexpected benefit of the remodelling was that now the delicious aromas from the kitchen helped to mask the odor from the secret compartment.

Recently, with Quarak's emergence as an artisan and the increased popularity of his Shoppe with both young swains and the ladies, Embrol has expanded again. This time he has had to add another lean-to at the back. To do this, he had to remove the doorway which had hidden the levers to the secret compartment. The levers are now hidden in the top and bottom sill of the Shoppe window. Because of this, Embrol had to let his children in on the secret. All of them know of the pit, but have no idea what is in it.

When he first opened the wall to the Eatery, the placement of the trap door leading to the pit had been no problem, being behind the counter. Now, unfortunately, it sits in the middle of the newly-expanded Shoppe, and every customer who enters probably walks over it. Embrol lives in fear of the day when one of his customers with a special gift for finding secret doors discovers the trap door, although Buddy's continued presence makes him feel safer.

While the increase in business has steadily added to the Sludges' prosperity, there are problems as well. Embrol's greatest concern is that as his wealth increases, the problem of what to do with it increases. Over the past few years, Quarak's ability as a jeweler has required the presence of small numbers of gold and silver ingots for use in his work. Though the children wanted to hide the metals in the pit, Embrol bought a safe and placed it inside a false cask behind the bar. Embrol knew that a master thief would find this hidden safe and hoped that it would draw him away from the family's real treasure. Embrol's other big worry is that the patron Jonah injured may return seeking revenge.

The Layout

Main Floor

The entrance to the Eatery faces the sea, and there is a sign identifying the establishment hanging above the door. The sign says: "Embrol Sludge's Eatery and Shell Shoppe: Where seafood is held dear, ye are welcome here! Bon Apetite!"

Inside, the bar lies along the left wall. The kitchen is in a separate room behind the wall opposite the entrance. There is a door leading from the kitchen to an alley behind the building. Stairs inside the kitchen lead up to another kitchen on the second floor, and there are two doors leading out of the kitchen into the restaurant. The wall to the right of the entrance has been removed to allow access to the Shell Shoppe. There is another door leading out of the Eatery to the privy. All the area in the middle of the Eatery is filled with tables and chairs for the patrons.

The Shell Shoppe takes up the remaining space. Quarak's workshop takes up the back third of the Shoppe. The middle third of is taken up with a counter with one stool behind it, a showcase, and two cabinets. In the ceiling of this third of the Shoppe is a hidden trap door that leads to the roof. The front third of the Shoppe is mostly open area for customers to walk around in, the hidden trap door to the cellar is located in the rear part of this third. There is also a window in the far right wall, the levers that control the water in the pit are hidden here.

The Upper Floor

1. The kitchen is located in the back right corner of the house. It is a normal family kitchen with two windows and three exits: two into the rest of the house and one into the Eatery kitchen via the stairway. This kitchen is sometimes used as an auxiliary kitchen by the inn on those rare occasions which demand it.

2. The dining area is not enclosed. There is a rectangular table, six chairs, and sideboard holding a pewter tea service.

3. The water closet has one entrance, and that leads into the dining area.

(Continued on page 30)

Birds of a Feather

Flocking Together With New Gamers

by Gary Reilly

Adventure gaming is a social hobby. While it is possible to amuse yourself with solitaire games, you need to interact with other people to derive the fullest potential from the hobby.

In the early days of the hobby, isolated gamers often found it difficult to locate other gamers. Over the years, however, gamers have multiplied and can be found almost everywhere.

Gamers new to the hobby should consider the following suggestions as a way to find other gamers. Veterans can find the information useful also if they are looking for new groups or are moving to new cities where they have no gaming contacts.

The First Step

Decide what you really want in a gaming group. This will help you understand what you are looking for, and, therefore, will help you recognize a group of gamers you would like to join.

Consider many factors. As a gamer do you have a strong preference for a certain game system or for a gaming genre such as fantasy, science fiction, or horror? Or are you willing to try your hand at any game available?

Next, think about the type of players you would like to meet. Do you have a preference for a certain age group? Keep in mind that age is not necessarily an important factor in determining any gamer's playing ability.

The Search for Fellow Gamers

Once you have defined what you are looking for in a group, you need to locate the gamers living in your area. How do you find them? On the surface, this may seem an impossible quest, but remember the adventurer hidden inside you.

Look for established gaming clubs. Depending on your personal gaming requirements (more on this later), contact the student union office of a nearby university or the club activities office of your school. If you are no longer in school, these contacts are still valuable. A growing number of students have organized game clubs that welcome all ages of players from the community.

Always seek out any local retail stores that cater to gamers. These could range from full-fledged game stores devoted entirely to the hobby to retailers who carry games as a smaller portion of their wares. This latter group can include bookstores (both new and used), comics dealers, and general hobby stores. Some stores have a bulletin board for their customers' use which can represent a treasure house of information on local gaming clubs seeking new members.

If there isn't such a bulletin board, take a few minutes to talk to the retailer and ask if he or she is aware of any gaming groups. Most retailers are very willing to help their customers because it builds goodwill and plays a part in encouraging sales. However, heed a word of caution. The store owners and salesclerks have a business to run and do not have an endless amount of time or energy to spend with you. Never abuse a retailer who is friendly and helpful.

Even if a retailer can't provide any candidates who are seeking new players, he or she still may be able to help. Tell the retailer you are a player in search of other gamers. Ask the retailer if you can post a small notice announcing your interest in finding other gamers. Keep the notice brief. Use an eye-catching headline; list your gaming interests, preferred genre or specific game system; your first name; instructions on how to contact you, such as leaving your telephone number and best times to call; and any other information that you think would be of interest to fellow gamers.

In addition, there are other avenues to make your gaming interest known. Post notices on bulletin boards at schools, universities, grocery stores, and laundry mats. Investigate the possibility of placing an inexpensive classified ad in a local newspaper or a high school or college publication.

Take a look at the regional gaming fanzines and national professional gaming magazines. A few offer inexpensive classified ads or carry listings of gamers and their interests. The POLYHEDRON™ Newszine currently offers a free classified ad service to RPGA™ Network members.

If you're fortunate enough to live in or near a city that hosts a gaming convention, take advantage of the opportunity. Conventions, no matter the size, tend to draw gamers of all ages from all over the area. Post one of your "Gamers Wanted" signs near the registration desk. Ask the convention organizers if they can help you contact other gamers in your area. And don't overlook science fiction conventions. Many of them host gaming events.

First Contact

Your efforts *will* pay off, and you eventually will make your first contact with a gaming group. This probably will be via telephone. Take some time to chat with the caller, discuss your gaming interests, and decide how they fit in with the interests of the group. Ask about style of play. Are the players in the group into one specific game system or genre? Are they fanatical role-players or do they approach gaming more as a social event? Is there a single game master or do various members take their turn at running their own campaigns?

Find out where they meet and how often. When does the game session normally start and how long does it last? You must determine if you have any commitments that could prevent you from showing up on a regular basis. Get specific directions to the gaming place, and plan on providing your own transportation rather than impose on the other players whom you have not yet met.

If you are concerned about drinking or smoking, now is the time to bring up the subject. Some gaming groups allow players to smoke or have a beer. Other groups are pretty strict about keeping these items out of the game session. A simple inquiry now helps avoid problems later.

Keep in mind that gamers are generally a good bunch of people with whom you can build great friendships. However, gamers also reflect many cross sections of the general population. When meeting for the first time, take

(Continued on page 31)

The Bureaucrat

A New NPC for Your Cities

by Jefferson Hankla

No matter what character you have or what dungeons you've wandered in, your paper heroes will stumble onto the big city at least once, if they live long enough. I'm fond of city adventures because a really good DM will pack them to the penthouses with wonderful people to meet (or defeat), fantastic places to see, and treasure to rival the lost Dutchman. And if you get tired of the city lights you will find that most cities are built atop an extensive system of sewers and drains that beat your average cavern for monsters per square foot.

If you, too, believe that a city is a great change of pace for your subterranean superbeings, perhaps you would like to add this character to your plot, for I have yet to see any government without the ever present and always frustrating bureaucrat.

Imagine, if you will, that your band of adventurers comes to a new city for a little R&R and to sell their booty (or maybe buy some). One second after passing the gates they are pounced upon by the local constabulary, who proclaim that the law says they must:

A. Check in their weapons and armor at the local lockup.
B. Purchase a license to sell their treasure (after giving the tax man his official cut).
C. Register themselves at the local guild.
D. Several other equally outrageous things.

This could lead to bloodshed, but city constables usually get their jobs due to a remarkable resemblance to giants, with personalities to match. So the wise decision is to do what the law requires. The party has to submit to these strange laws because the government has been overrun with bureaucrats. These characters have but one purpose in life; to create and enforce laws.

In its early stages, a government can usually be handled by a small circle of dedicated and loyal followers. The new ruler appoints a few trusted people to manage things. Sooner or later, however, the whole thing grows to the point where the ruling clique has too much work to do. So the ruler hires people to staff small branches of government, each dealing with specific portions of laws. Soon, the government grows geometrically in proportion with the population it governs, and the nuts and bolts of the system goes into the hands of mass numbers of people who usually are not as bright and nowhere near as loyal as the original people. And when the government has been running for a century or so without much change, it becomes burdened with rules and regulations that become more important to the government than the people they are suppose to govern. Small micro-managed portions of government control almost every aspect of living. People are a silver piece a dozen, but the **law is the law.** This is where the bureaucrat comes in. Here is the only creature capable of working in this type of government without going mad.

Bureaucrats are strange beings indeed. They will be of whatever race is prevalent in the area (it is also said that gnomes make good bureaucrats). They are more lawful than paladins, more tedious than sages, and (in the upper levels) more evil than devils. They are as literal as the results from a *ring of wishes*, as boring as rocks, and as abrasive as gravel.

Bureaucrats are never adventurers. They look down their long noses at anyone who would get more than a paper cut in the line of duty. (Security is an important bureaucratic byword.) Bureaucrats rely on hirelings and stooges to enforce the laws they make in the comfort of their offices. The quickest way to find yourself in trouble is to molest a bureaucrat.

At level one bureaucrats are lawful good and usually very helpful. Unfortunately, they are not in a position to be very much help. As their tenure in government goes on they shift to lawful neutral. At this point, they may be helpful or not depending on their mood or — more importantly — the mood of their bosses. At higher levels they are uncaring and self-possessed — lawful evil creatures. They will help only those who can help them progress in some way. They are free the make these alignment changes, and actually benefit from them because their deities are the the laws themselves. They derive power and position from these laws and will gladly die (easily at first) to protect them. They worship and covet laws and give their faith to them. This law worship allows them to work even for the most chaotic of rulers because they are not really serving the rulers, but the rulers' laws. The most chaotic ruler must have laws to retain control, and if he levies enough of them his government soon comes to the attention of the bureaucrats, who come out of the woodwork like rats. The end result is that before the ruler can say "Howsyahooty" his subjects must have licenses for buying, selling, traveling, training, eating, sleeping, and breathing. Bureaucrats manage taxation to the smallest detail. This is because they need funds to perpetuate themselves and their bureaucracies. (Proliferation is another important bureaucratic byword.)

After bureaucrats worm their way into local government they quickly work their true magic by displacing all other moral authority. They will repeal most laws set down by clerics or paladins, as such laws are usually subjective and do little to help the bureaucracy. This is sometimes a slow process and can totally escape the notice of religious leaders. In fact, when bureaucrats take over, clerics soon find themselves on the other side of the new laws. The real master stroke in any bureaucratic takeover is when they usurp the rightful government leaders. This will happen almost overnight, with the leader finding himself facing a court of bureaucrats for some "major" infraction of a law that suddenly appeared on the books when the leader was busy with things other than lawmaking.

When trying to stop a bureaucracy it is important to know that trying to infiltrate one is worse than storming a fortress while armed with a toothpick, and trying to work inside one (if you do get in) is like a two-week game of *Paranoia.* The best way to beat a bureaucracy is the time honored and old fashioned way — rebellion.

Statistics for individual bureaucrats are less important than attributes of the system itself. However, here are some guidelines: A low level bureaucrat generally has an Armor Class of 10 and

about 3 hit points. A middle level bureaucrat has an Armor Class of 8 and 2d4 hit points. An upper middle level bureaucrat has an Armor Class of 6 and has 4d4 hit points. A high level bureaucrat has an Armor Class of 4 and 5d4 hit points. Very high level bureaucrats have statistics similar to arch devils (see the *Monster Manual* tome). Bureaucrats never use armor or weapons. Their armor class and hit points come from a very thick skin and a hard head. Killing even a first level bureaucrat usually requires hacking one's way through several fighters and a cavalier. Getting to the big cheese requires dispatching a small army, navy, marine corps, and the ladies social club and garden society. GOOD LUCK!

Bureaucratic Spells

Bureaucrats have developed specialized spells to help with their varied tasks. The DM may wish to give them a few reversed, legerdemain, or illusionist cantrips as well.

First Level Spells

Sharpen Pencil *(Alteration)*
Components: *V,S*
Range: *Touch*
Duration: *Permanent*
Casting Time: *1 Segment*
Area of Effect: *Instrument Touched*
Saving Throw: *None*

This spell causes any pencil or writing instrument that could become dull, to become sharp — to a bureaucrat a dull pencil is one of the most loathsome things in existence.

Make Coffee *(Alteration)*
Components: *V,S,M*
Range: *Touch*
Duration: *Permanent*
Casting Time: *1 Segment*
Area of Effect: *1 Gallon of Water*
Saving Throw: *None*

This spell causes an urn of cold water to become an urn of fresh hot coffee. Coffee is the bureaucrat's lifesblood and is consumed throughout the day. Woe be to the underling that does not have the chairman's coffee ready when he walks into the office! The material component for this spell is a pinch of coarsely ground vegetable matter.

ABYSS UNIVERSITY
AU
I'M SORRY SIR, BUT ORDERS FROM THE DIRECTOR SAYS NO MORE PALADIN LICENCES WILL BE ISSUED THIS QUARTER!
MR. AWFUL DISTRICT DIRECTOR
HANKLA

Entangle with Red Tape *(Abjuration)*
Components: *V,S*
Range: *Unlimited*
Duration: *1d4 Days*
Casting Time: *1 Segment*
Area of Effect: *Special*
Saving Throw: *None*

This spell causes a person's request, file, form, license, or other business to become entangled in red tape which has already been created by a higher level bureaucrat.

Fill in the Form *(Evocation/Divination)*
Components: *V*
Range: *10'*
Duration: *Permanent*
Casting Time: *Special*
Area of Effect: *1 form*
Saving Throw: *None*

This spell causes a form to be magically filled in as the verbal portion is uttered. The bureaucrat asks a series of questions which must be answered by another creature. The creature's answers become etched on the form as they are uttered. Any answer that is a lie or deception will be etched in red. This will quickly result in the deceiver being jailed under the charge of "making a false official statement."

Detect Lie *(Divination)*
Components: *S,M*
Range: *Touch*
Duration: *Permanent*
Casting Time: *Special*
Area of Effect: *Special*
Saving Throw: *None*

This spell is similar to the clerical spell of the same name. In addition to the differences noted above, the bureaucrat's spell will detect any attempt at evasion or deception. The caster begins by writing down everything said by the creature he wishes to test for falsehood. If a lie or deception is recorded, the black ink of the writing turns red. The individual caught in a deception suffers the same fate as noted in the *fill in the form* spell.

Find the File *(Divination)*
Components: *V*
Range: *Caster*
Duration: *Special*
Casting Time: *1d4 + 1 days*
Area of Effect: *Special*
Saving Throw: *None*

This inexplicably difficult spell causes the location of a needed file to become magically known to the caster. How long the caster retains this information

is entirely dependent on the caster's own memory, which is usually conveniently short.

Second Level Spells

Lose the File *(Abjuration)*
Components: *V*
Range: *Unlimited*
Duration: *Special*
Casting Time: *2 Segments*
Area of Effect: *1 file*
Saving Throw: *None*

This simple spell causes a chosen file to become lost in the void until a *find the file* spell from a bureaucrat of higher level than the caster is used to retrieve it.

Create Red Tape *(Abjuration)*
Components: *V,S,M*
Range: *10 '*
Duration: *Special*
Casting Time: *2 Segments*
Area of Effect: *Special*
Saving Throw: *None*

Red tape is the bureaucrats' term for any action that is extended far beyond the labor that is really needed to complete it. When cast, the caster chooses a strange set of circumstances, snafus, and accidents to befall the needed license, form, file, etc. This is done to facilitate the first level *entangle with red tape* spell as the lower level bureaucrat does not have the power or knowledge of the system needed to create the needed red tape. Red tape is a very useful tool for the bureaucrat. If a person requests information that the bureaucracy wishes to keep to itself, the request is bogged down in red tape until the requester gets frustrated and quits, or dies of old age. Red tape also is used to control the number of licenses given out, or the number of forms and permits available. Or course, the bureaucracy still collects all fees from the person requesting the action. The material component for this spell is any long, thin piece of red material. The red tape created remains until used in an *entangle with red tape* spell.

Summon Form
(Conjuration/Summoning)
Components: *V*
Range: *Caster*
Duration: *Permanent*
Casting Time: *2 Segments or 1d4 weeks, at caster's option*
Area of Effect: *Caster*
Saving Throw: *None*

This utterance causes the correct form needed to fill a file or do the job to magically appear before the caster.

Stamp the Form *(Evocation)*
Components: *S*
Range: *Touch*
Duration: *Permanent*
Casting Time: *1/s Segment*
Area of Effect: *Form touched*
Saving Throw: *None*

When the caster makes a hammering motion with his fist the caster's personal glyph appears on the form, scroll, or tablet touched.

Third Level Spells

Create Form *(Abjuration)*
Components: *V,S*
Range: *Touch*
Duration: *Permanent*
Casting Time: *3 Segments*
Area of Effect: *Special*
Saving Throw: *None*

When the caster completes the obtuse utterances and incomprehensible gestures of this spell, a new legal action and the form needed to complete it come into being.

Blacklist *(Alteration)*
Components: *V,S,M*
Range: *Territory Governed*
Duration: *Permanent*
Casting Time: *3 Segments*
Area of Effect: *1 Creature*
Saving Throw: *None*

This spell is a potent negative action used after *lose the form* and *entangle with tape* spells do not work. It magically causes the target creature to become repugnant (Charisma 3, Comliness -1) to all bureaucrats. The target also suffers a -2 penalty to Charisma and Comliness to everyone else. All the victim's files, licenses, permits, etc. are cast into the void, and the victim's name disappears from wherever it has been written by the bureaucracy. The Charisma and Comliness penalties can be cured by a *remove curse* spell, but the full effect only can be reversed with a *wish.* The material component is a small black marble which must be hurled in the target's general direction when the spell is completed.

Create Minor Law *(Abjuration)*
Components: *V,S,M*
Range: *Touch*
Duration: *Permanent*
Casting Time: *special*
Area of Effect: *Special*
Saving Throw: *None*

This spell causes a new minor law to be written into the law books throughout the bureaucracy. The law appears in the exact words the caster speaks during the verbal portion of the casting. The traditional open words are: "So shall it be written!" The material component is a blank scroll.

Create Office *(Conjuration/ Summoning)*
Components: *V,S,M*
Range: *Territory governed*
Duration: *Permanent*
Casting Time: 3 Segments
Area of Effect: *Special*
Saving Throw: *None*

This spell causes a new office to appear at the location of the caster's choosing and calls lower level bureaucrats to staff it. This spell is cast as required by a *create major law* spell, or to help enforce a *minor law.* The material component is a small tin cylinder, open at one end and filled with earthworms.

Fourth Level Spell

Create Bureau
(Conjuration/Summoning
Components: *V,S,M*
Range: *Territory Governed*
Duration: *Permanent*
Casting Time: *2d4 weeks*
Area of Effect: *Special*
Saving Throw: *None*

This spell causes a new government subdivision to come into existence to enforce the desires of a high level bureaucrat who has cast a *create major law* spell. This will usually cause lower level bureaucrats to cast *create office* spells, and cause them to cast *minor law* spells to augment it, and so forth until an entire new bureau is in existence. Fortunately, this is a very hard spell to cast. The results of the effort are widely tracked at Board Meetings (see below) and the long-term results of the new bureaus are what makes or breaks the caster. If the caster creates enough new bureaus that collect new revenue or create minor laws, he can progress to

the higher levels. The material component for this spell is a nest of vipers (preferably venomous).

Fifth Level Spell

Create Major Law *(Abjuration)*
Components: *V,S,M*
Range: *Touch*
Duration: *Permanent*
Casting Time: *Special*
Area of Effect: *Special*
Saving Throw: *None*

This spell causes a major law to appear in the land. This starts a chain reaction in the bureaucracy at each successful casting. It causes bureaus to come into being, new minor laws, red tape, forms, files, licenses, permits, and so forth. It is the major form of bureaucratic proliferation. It takes at least a month of casting to create a *major law,* as the spell first must be chiseled into a stone tablet (it is said that high level bureaucrats are the world's greatest chisellers). When completed, the law is referred to in the bureaucracy as being "Written in Stone." To complete the spell, the caster must attend a board meeting and read the spell (preferably in the light of a full moon or at midnight, or both). Then the caster passes the tablet to the rest of the board for review. Higher level bureaucrats often put their own glyph on the law, or they can request that it be changed; then the bureaucrat has to recast the spell from the beginning. When the law is approved by the board, the caster calls his own board meeting and passes the tablet to his underlings. This is known as "Laying Down the Law" because the tablet is very heavy and the caster is happy to get it off his hands. The underlings then look it over and cast the necessary spells to inflict the law on the people.

Board Meetings

Board meetings are secret ceremonies that usually make black masses look tame in comparison. They are held in large rooms sealed behind massive black doors of oak and iron. These doors are always warded against any form of intrusion or eavesdropping while a meeting is in progress.

No non-bureaucrat has attended a board meeting and lived to tell of it. It is also said that not a few bureaucrats have lost their heads at these meetings, due to some transgression or for poor performance.

The reason they are called board meetings is probably due to the very long and thin table the bureaucrats cluster around. The chairman occupies one end, and the vice chairman the other. This table is said to have runes of power carved in it. Flasks of strange potions and numerous pots of coffee are placed on the table, evenly spaced so all present may partake.

Board meetings are dark, stress-filled, and fast-paced events. One of the most fearsome and horrible admonitions that can be laid on low level bureaucrats is a threat to "bring them before the board."

The chairmen of the boards have a higher board that they, too, must attend. Little is known about this type of meeting, except that at it, they must summon their own chairman from a distant lower plane. This is a most secret and dreadful meeting and is only held annually. Dark smoke and foul odors stream from the room when the meeting is finished, and it is said that never as many leave these meetings as enter them. ❑

Bureaucrat

Experience Points	Level	Title	Spells Per Day
Low Level Bureaucrats (Alignment: Lawful Good)			
0—100	1	Flunky	None
101—300	2	Gopher	None
301—700	3	Secretary	None
701—1500	4	Foreman	None
Middle Level Bureaucrats (Alignment: Lawful Neutral)			
1501—3100	5	Boss	1 - - - -
3101—6300	6	Supervisor	2 - - - -
6301—12700	7	Manager	3 - - - -
12701—24700	8	Jr. Executive	4 - - - -
Upper Middle Level Bureaucrats (Alignment: Lawful Evil)			
24701—48700	9	Executive Secretary	4 1 - - -
48701—84700	10	Executive	4 2 - - -
84701—132700	11	Administrator	4 3 - - -
132701—192700	12	Director	4 4 - - -
High Level Bureaucrats (Alignment: Lawful REALLY Evil)			
192701—264700	13	Bureaucrat	4 4 1 - -
264701—348700	14	Senior Director	4 4 2 - -
348701—444700	15	Vice President	4 4 3 - -
444701—552700	16	President	4 4 4 - -
Very High Level Bureaucrats (Alignment: Lawful VERY Evil)			
552701—564700	17	Board Member	4 4 4 1 1
564701—698700	18	Sr. Board Member	4 4 4 2 1
698701—713300	19	Vice Chairman	4 4 4 3 1
713301 +	20	Chairman of the Board	4 4 4 4 1

Playing Illusions

Greetings And Hallucinations

by Stephen Fuelleman

The illusionist is one of the most challenging character classes to play in the AD&D® game. His spells are either the most powerful, or the most useless, depending on the rules the DM uses.

Illusions, and their misuse, are one of the biggest wild cards in the game. If unrestricted, they can unbalance the game and ruin the fun for all. However, if there is too much control, the fun can be ruined for the illusionist, and there will be hard feelings at the game table. To try and save these spells, let's look at what they can, and can't, do.

One interpretation I have seen many times is that the damage done by illusions is imaginary and goes away when the illusion does. This is not correct. The books clearly state that the illusion will affect the viewer just as the real thing would, "even to the extent of taking damage from illusory missiles, or from falling into an imaginary pit full of spikes." The damage is real. Characters killed by illusions are dead. The damage was not done by the victim's mind, it was done by the power of the spell.

The second most common error is that victims always get saving throws. Wrong again. Victims are entitled to a saving throw vs. spell, adjusted for Wisdom, only if they have reason to doubt the reality of what they are viewing. Player characters may ask for this save any time they want, and the DM must decide when there is a flaw in the illusion significant enough to make a monster doubt it. The DM should roll this save, even for PCs. All he or she should know is whether the thing in front of the character looks real. Reasons for a save might be that an illusion has no sound, when one would normally occur, or that it popped up from nowhere, directly in front of a creature. Casting a *phantasmal* dungeon cave-in can kill monsters, but smarter ones will notice that the illusionist stood around for six seconds (one segment) muttering and gesturing right before the collapse, and that the falling rocks do not have any scent and do not make noise.

Illusions can imitate spell effects to a limited extent, but there is inconsistency here: the *shadow magic* and *demi shadow magic* spells imitate magical forces. However, if the *phantasmal* spells are allowed to imitate *any* creature, object, or force, then magical forces should be included, making the *shadow magic* spells pretty useless. Some have used this to rule that *phantasmal* spells cannot imitate spells. But if this is accepted, then the *shadow monster* and *demi shadow monster* spells would prevent *phantasmal* creatures as well. Clearly this is not the intent of these spells. To moderate the power of *phantasmal force,* remember that it must have some visible manifestation of power, like a *fireball* or *lightning bolt.* Also, if they cannot be seen, *phantasmal* spells do not work. Spells such as *charm person,* which have no visible effects, cannot be duplicated with *phantasmal force.* Note that the *shadow magic* spells do damage even if unseen, or even with disbelief and a successful save. They are the next stage in the progression from the pure illusion spells such as *phantasmal force,* to the purely real spells such as *alter reality.*

Another common misunderstanding about illusions in general is that they are dispelled when touched. This is only true if the caster fails to make the illusion react to the contact. In the case of the pit full of spikes mentioned in the spell description, the pit's appropriate reaction would be to simply sit there. In the case of a monstrous illusion, it would need to be made to flinch, bleed, or cry out in pain.

Many people believe that the undead monsters are immune to illusions. This is not stated anywhere in the rules, and at best it is only partly true. Those undead which are absolutely mindless, such as skeletons and zombies, are effectively immune. Without a brain there can be no belief. The more powerful undead have intelligence, and any creature with eyes and a brain can be fooled.

The rule book also does not mention the popular myth that ignorance is protection. Victims of the spells do not need to know what the illusion is, or believe that they can die from it. Even if they do not know that lightning hurts, an illusory *lightning bolt* can still kill them. The power of the spell is not in the viewer's mind, but in the caster's level and ability. It is not understanding on the part of the victim, but the passive belief that they are seeing something real, even if it is not understood. The *lack* of active disbelief makes them vulnerable to the illusion's special brand of reality. Damage is not psychosomatic, it is magical and very, very real.

Characters who try to disbelieve everything they see should not be allowed to. Armor class and saving throws depend on active defense in the AD&D game. If the monster is real, then it should be given a free attack at a disbelieving character, as if attacking a prone opponent, +4 "to hit" and no shield or Dexterity bonus. (Some DMs are nastier, and treat the disbeliever as a magically held opponent — all attacks hit automatically and do maximum damage.) Trying to disbelieve a real *fireball* could bring a -4 penalty to the saving throw, or no save at all. Disbelieving everything is a good way to die young.

Now that we have made the *phantasmal force* spell ridiculously powerful, let's chop it down to size.

Ignorance is not immunity, but illusions of things unknown to the victims may well entitle them to a saving throw. If they never have seen or heard of anything like the illusion before, their first reflexive reaction likely will be a stunned, "I don't believe it!"

When using an illusion to imitate a natural disaster, such as a rock slide or a falling roof, remember that this will *always* look wrong. The spell can create an illusion of any creature, object, or force. That means one object, not millions. A rock slide or cave-in could be done, but all the rocks would have to remain in contact with the main mass at all times. This would look strange and would entitle the victim to a saving throw.

When creating monsters, this means one monster, not dozens. A good house rule is to have monsters attack as if they had the same number of hit dice as the illusionist who created them. This reflects the fact that the illusion has none of the actual combat skills that the real monster has, and must rely on the

illusionist's knowledge.

Remember that such monsters will vanish if hit in combat unless the caster can make the creature react appropriately. A good house rule to represent this is to require that a save vs. paralyzation be made by the caster (without device bonuses), to see if he can make the illusion react in time to stay believable. This also implies that the caster must have some way of watching the battle, which can leave him open to attack. This keeps illusions from becoming all powerful, yet accounts for the higher level illusionists being more proficient at their craft.

Creating *fireballs* and *lightning bolts* will work, but remember that a five-dice *fireball* looks just like a 20-dice *fireball;* the volume is always the same. The same applies to *lightning bolts*; they are either 80 feet long and 5 feet wide, or 40 feet long and 10 feet wide (note that the 80-foot version is longer than the maximum area of effect for a *phantasmal force* cast at lower level). To keep illusions of these things playable, consider implementing the limits of the real spells — the damage will be equal to one six sided die for each level of the caster. A first level illusionist could create a *fireball* doing one die of damage. Also, remember that if the illusory attack is disbelieved it will do no damage at all.

Illusions designed to cause instant death shouldn't be allowed, such as a *sphere of annihilation.* Illusions can do real damage, in terms of hit points, but other special attacks and magical effects (such as total annihilation) are not within the illusion's power.

A popular house rule limits the illusionist to simulating things he has actually seen or experienced. This defines the limits of the spell rather nicely, keeping its power in scale with the game world the character is playing in. The *Dungeon Masters Guide* (page 45) states the caster must know of and understand the force/creature he is making an illusion of. If the caster is inexperienced with a particular illusion, it will be very poor, probably *unbelievably* poor.

Attempting to create an illusion of something beyond the caster's experience should be treated as a fanciful invention. For example, if a first level illusionist projects an image of a giant hand, then that is all it is. It does not have the power of a *Bigby's hand* spell, since the illusionist does not really know what a *Bigby's hand* spell is. The DM has to decide what damage a giant,

disembodied hand does, if any, and need not follow the descriptions in the *Bigby's hand* spells. There is no difference between an illusion of something that does not really exist, and an illusion of something that the illusionist does not know exists.

In short, the power of the illusion is not in the name the illusionist calls it. Calling something a 20-dice *lightning bolt* doesn't make it a 20-dice *lightning bolt,* unless the DM is the one doing the calling. A *fireball* looks very much like a missile from a *meteor swarm,* so unless the illusionist actually has seen the difference (several times), there will be no difference. An illusionist who has never seen a *fireball* probably will cast something that resembles a flask of burning oil. You may wish to automatically give viewers a chance to save whenever illusions of a fanciful nature are being cast, so illusionists are better off sticking to things they know.

No matter what rules or guidelines you invent, there are players who will try to rationalize a way around them. There are times when the DM simply has to say **"NO,"** and disallow an abusive use of a spell or power (illusion or not). There should be a good reason available, or this will just promote more arguments and rationalizations from the players.

Some players will try to abuse the illusion spells by creating unbelievably powerful illusions, knowing that a couple of the opponents will fail their saving throws no matter how ridiculous the image they create. The key to foiling these plans lies in the key phrase "unbelievably powerful." Simply rule that nobody believed. Another way to prevent such abuse is to add a house rule requiring that the illusionist make a reasonable effort to create a believable illusion. Without such an effort, you should give the opponents some bonuses to their saves, or allow an automatic save vs. a really bad illusion.

In conclusion, we must face the fact that there always will be those who are dissatisfied with the illusion spells as a whole. Many players will say that one spell is too powerful, while a higher level spell is too weak, or that the spells make no sense the way they are written. To those people I would like to point out that murky spell descriptions are not new to the AD&D® game, or restricted to any one class. I would also like to point out that magic doesn't have to make sense to us, or fit the physical laws of our cause-and-effect world.

That is why they call it magic. ❑

(Embrol Sludge, continued from page 22)

4. Endicott's room is spacious. It has two windows and a door opening into the common room. The room is furnished with a bed, rocking chair, footlocker, table, and two straight-backed chairs. There is a checkerboard on the table, usually with the remnants of a game. In his footlocker Endicott has spare hooks, a small net, tackle, a small pouch with 15 cp, a novel, and normal clothing.

5. This is a storage closet containing clothing, a barrel of oil, and other normal items.

6. This room is another water closet, but it also serves as the hiding place for the family's emergency money. A waterproof jar in the water tank holds 10 cp, 10 sp, 10 ep, 10 gp, and 2 pp.

7. Dirk's room is a mess. It is furnished similarly to Endicott's room, although it is smaller and only has one window. Laying about in the mess are: a wooden sword, a sheaf of love letters from a number of the town's young ladies, a sap, crude thieves' tools and picks, a half-written love letter to a petty nobleman's daughter, a handbill from a traveling circus and medicine show, a tin whistle, dandyish clothes, a small pouch of itching powder, and a dagger.

8. Embrol's room is large. It has a canopied and draped double bed, a desk with an oil lamp, a desk chair, a fireplace with three ships in a bottle on the mantle, two wingback chairs, a small oval rug, a small night table on which sits a water pitcher and bottle, and the Eatery's business ledger. He keeps no valuables here, though his hand-carved chess set (on the desk) is worth a few

gold pieces. He has a long sword hidden inside the fireplace in case of an emergency.

9. Radea's room is neat as a pin. She has a bed, a wardrobe, and a table with pitcher and water. A small, crude secret compartment has been cut into the rail of her bed where she hides a letter and a necklace from her true love, Tjhal Rajhmathen. Although she doesn't know it, she has a *necklace of adaptation.* The letter simply tells her to wear it the next time she comes to visit and that he has a surprise for her. The rest of the text is of a highly personal nature. It is written in Common and the ink is a trifle runny.

10. This storage room contains most of Alhambra's old clothes and personal possessions. It also contains a secret door which leads onto the roof of the Shoppe. On the roof, there is a secret trap door that allows one to drop into the Shoppe quite near the trap door leading into the cellar.

11. Quarak's room is cluttered with tools for working on jewelry, including many small picks, a bullseye lantern, and a large magnifying lens set into a frame so that it need not be held. There is a bed and a small table with a straight-backed chair pulled up to it. Beneath his mattress he has hidden a small leather sack containing a silver pendant and a gold ring (both with empty settings for stones), three small white pearls, one small black pearl, and various small shells. The contents are worth 198 gp.

12. This storage area contains clothing, household items, and fishing equipment.

13. The common room has a large oval carpet, two overstuffed chairs, a small couch, a wooden rocker, and two wooden end tables with small lanterns. A light fixture made from a ship's wheel hangs from the center of the room; it has five oil lamps secured to it. ❑

(Notes from HQ, continued from page 4)

preparing for the convention about a year in advance, and his efforts yielded a good convention. Although it was a small convention, the gamers who attended it were pleased with the tournament offerings and the hard work of Tim's 10-member staff. It was one of the most organized conventions I have attended. Tim didn't even let us help score the events, as he had a team ready to deal with all the paperwork in the DM Headquarters. All the tournaments took place on the top floor of the student union building, which meant gamers had the opportunity to sample the university's cafeteria food and stroll around the campus. Tim and his staff are planning a second Ville-Con this fall. I highly recommend adding it to your list of conventions to attend this year.

On the Lighter Side

Although POLYHEDRON™ Newszine no longer has an April Fools issue, the staff felt it appropriate to present a few articles of an unusual nature. So, for your reading pleasure, we offer *Junk Bonds, Skully's Bar and Bait,* and *Embrol Sludge's Eatery and Shell Shoppe.* And on a humorous note, we offer The Bureaucrat NPC class. Finally, we offer a cartoon caption contest (see page 31). All captions must be submitted by July 1st, 1989. The winner will receive a T-shirt bearing the cartoon and the winning caption. Enjoy.

Take Care,

Jean ❑

(Birds, continued from page 23)

some precautions. Let someone else know where you are going, including providing an address and telephone number in case you need to be reached. If you feel uncomfortable, consider asking a friend to go with you to the first game or two.

First Impressions

Now that you have located a potential group of gamers and have shown up for your first session, keep a few things in mind to help you become assimilated into the group.

Be low key at first. Remember, you are joining an established group of players who probably use a variety of rules of conduct. Be friendly and show an interest in gaming, but don't come on too strongly. Assume the role of apprentice at first. Be observant and try to understand the dynamics functioning in the group.

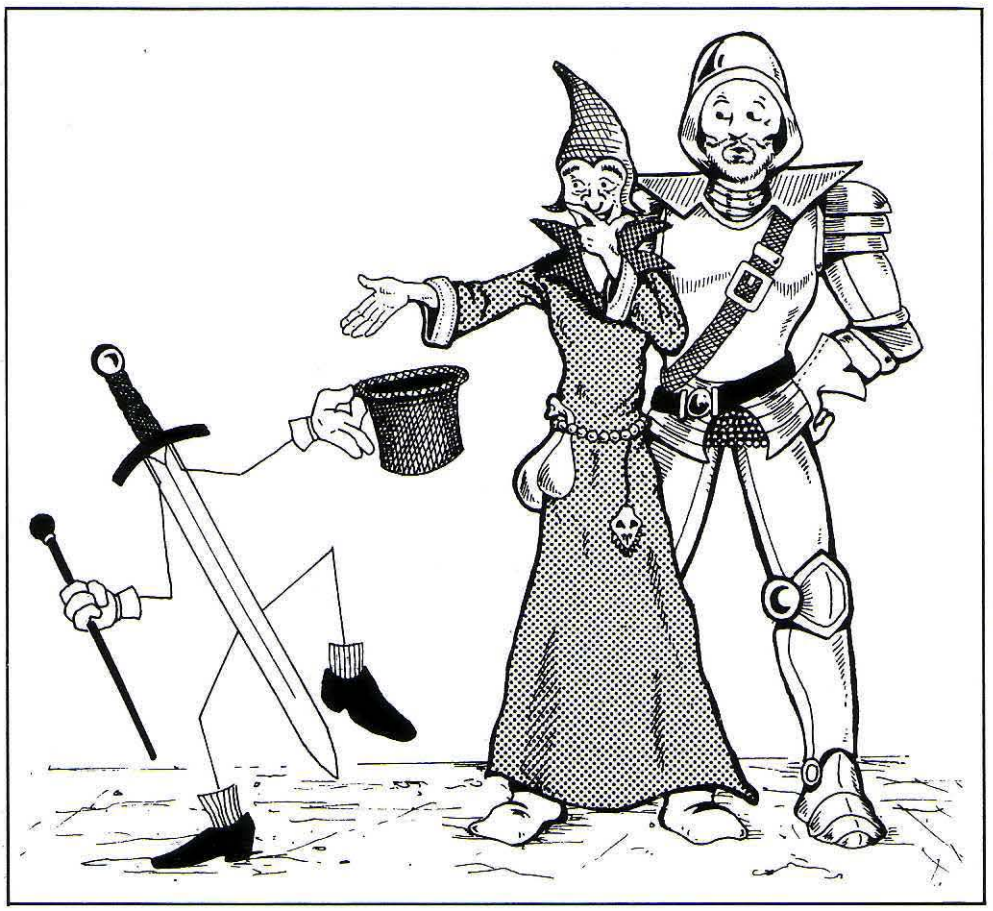
Some groups emphasize role playing of the characters' personas with strict attention to the game. Some emphasize tactics in battle with detailed advance planning. Others inject a healthy dose of humor and puns during play. Still other groups use the gaming session primarily as a social event, where gaming becomes secondary. Whatever the case, try to understand the group's dynamics and react appropriately.

As the other gamers warm up to you, talk about topics other than gaming. Try to identify some other common interests. The game may bring players together, but other shared values and experiences result in lasting friendships.

You probably will be joining a campaign that already is in progress. In this case, take the time to get some background. Ask the game master to give you an introduction to the world. If the game master is agreeable, schedule this introduction before your first gaming session so that you do not take up too much of everyone's game time. Also, the other players likely will be very willing to share their own past experiences in the world.

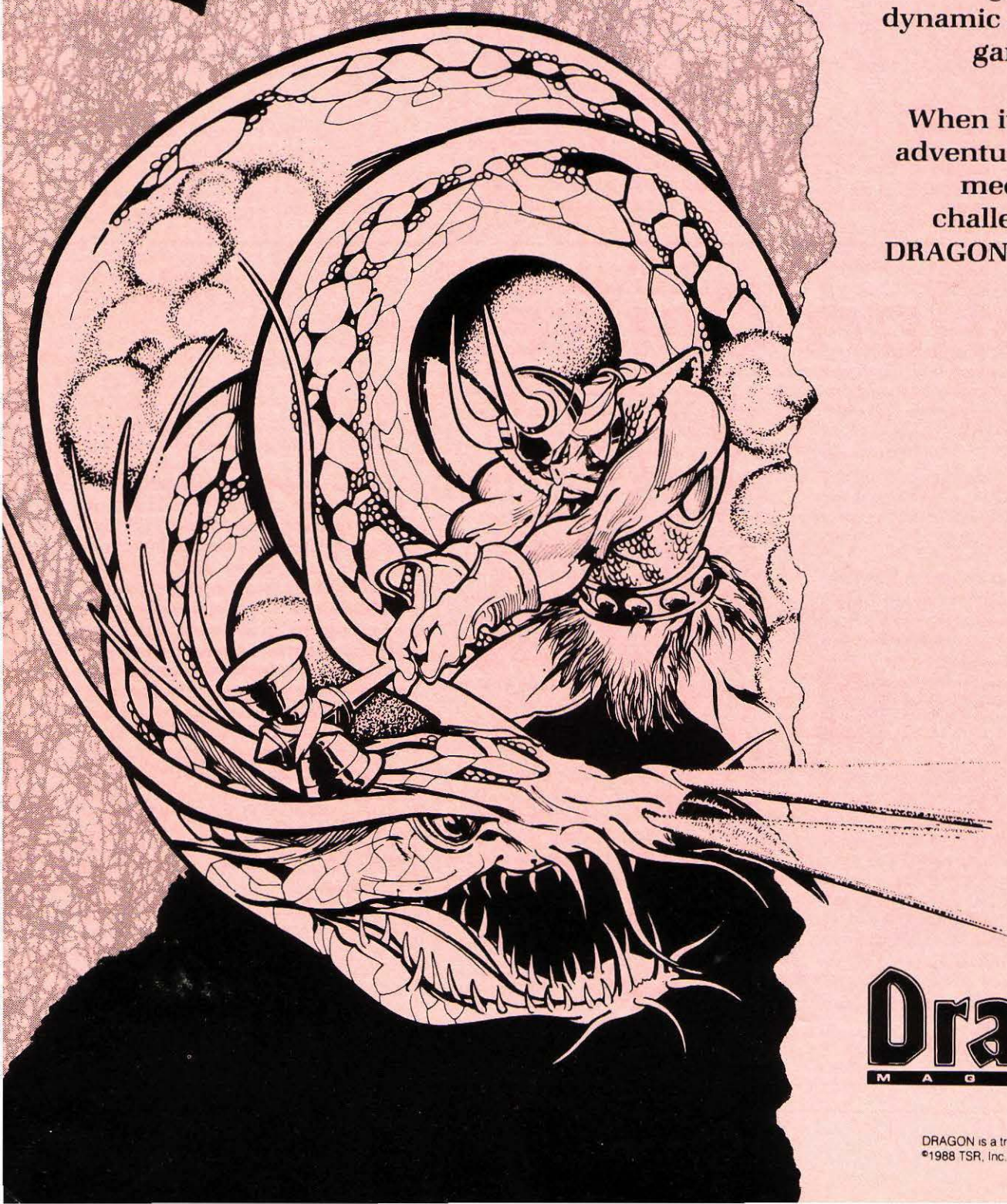
With some effort and a little luck, you can find yourself enjoying the company of fellow gamers and developing new friends. ❑

Caption Contest



Like the cartoon? Would you like to show it off on a T-shirt? Would you like to show it off on a free T-shirt with your very own caption beneath it? Well, if you answered yes, keep reading. Artist and RPGA Network member David Zenz rendered this cartoon, but it lacks a caption. And since the editors of this Newszine can't stand to have a cartoon go captionless, we decided to turn the search for the proper caption into a contest. The winner will receive the above-mentioned T-shirt and the fame and glory associated with having their name appear in the POLYHEDRON™ Newszine. Send all entries to Caption Contest, RPGA™ Network HQ, P.O. Box 515, Lake Geneva, WI 53147 by July 1.

NO QUARTER



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